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HARLAN ELLISON

"BOY AND HIS DOG" ON FILM!

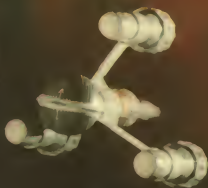
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TRIBUTE TO A PIONEER OF SF CINEMA

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METEOR ARRIVES!



SEE PAGE 4

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Volume 2, Number 6 :

One of the biggest problems in magazine production is actually seeing a film or tv show early enough to be able to feature a review in print at the right time! Far too often, our printing schedules are so far ahead of the news stands date that most "current reviews" are more like nostalgic comments! That's why we're double pleased this issue to be able to include our interviews with both new *Liberator* crew members in our two-part feature on *Blake's 7*. Sad to say, though the third season of this popular BBC series is about to reach your screens, rumour has it it will be the last. Over to you for your comments.

Des Stone



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METEOR — WHY THE HOLD-UP?

TONY CRAWLEY GETS THE FACTS STRAIGHT FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SANDY HOWARD

Sandy Howard had the best poster in Cannes this year. And the worst headache. A year ago, the producer told me just how fantastic his Meteor movie was. It sounded a shade better than okay. A comet smashes through an asteroid belt exploding a five-mile wide meteor, and accompanying splinters, on 72,000 mph collision course with Earth. The splinters demolish a whole mountain in the Austrian Alps, churn the Pacific Ocean into a 100ft high tidal wave and nearly destroy New York City. To prevent an even worse catastrophe both Russia and America send rockets and missiles to destroy — or at least deflect — the big mother of a meteor itself . . .

"I think it's a sensational, big, very suspenseful film made by an outstanding film-maker, Ronald Neame, who makes a lot of these younger fellows — who think they're marvellous — look like bums." That's what Sandy Howard told me in May, 1978, and to the buyers queuing outside his office for a slice of "the most monumental film project undertaken in Hollywood in 20 years." Deals were fast being signed and opening dates agreed upon right round the globe. Then, came the delays. One darned hold-up after another. The '78 premiere date went by the board. The '79 dates came unglued. The June 15 start for America came apart at the seams, and a new nationwide release pattern was inaugurated for mid-October. Japan got in first with late September; America and most of Europe rearranged their plans for October. Perhaps.

A long wait for a movie, however monumental, which Britain's Ronnie Neame started shooting in three Hollywood studios on October 31, 1977 . . .

So what went wrong? Ambition, says Sandy Howard. "There were so many people involved who thought it should be a bigger picture. It became Topsy, growing and growing and growing. As a result, we put demands upon ourselves to make tidal waves bigger, avalanches bigger, story bigger and Meteor became . . . bigger. When you have a bigger picture — with opticals — you have bigger problems. It's a simple equation. It's now a very expensive film. But it looks it on screen."

He stops. Not for long, Sandy Howard

is one of the fastest-talking producers in Hollywood. He talks in identifiable sentences, paragraphs, jokes, quotes and exclamation marks. His past credits include A Man Called Horse, The Island of Dr Moreau, Embryo, Circle of Iron (ex-The Silent Flute). His current schedule includes City on Fire, Chris Lee's Jaguar Lives, The Gold Train, The Power Barons, Death Ship, Brainstorm, some of which he'll discuss in later issues.

He's a showman, then, but he never

tries to snow you. "Meteor is an astonishing film because it encompasses more events and happenings than any other film of its nature. It's not a disaster film. It is a series of disasters . . . a suspense film in the truest sense. I think it will work in every single country in the world. Yes, it has become more costly. But this is the nature of the game. It's a big business, big pictures."

Originally, the film — and indeed what was once the completed film — had a





budget of 13-million dollars. Then came the decision to have all — or most — of the special effects, visuals and opticals re-shot. Ronnie Neame sent for his Poseidon team, editor Harold Kress and production designer Bill Crebe. Also joining the team at this 11th hour were visual effects master Bill Cruse and special effects technician Margot Anderson.

Their work was not even finished when Sandy Howard talked exclusively to *Starburst* in May, 1979. There was light at the end of the tunnel, though, and Sandy could joke about it. "As we talk at this very moment, there are twelve Nubian slaves working on the effects until about an hour before the picture opens. But it *will* be finished."

Starburst: How's it looking?

Sandy Howard: Quite extraordinary! The difficulty about this kind of film is that it's always a learning process. It is one thing for a producer to learn, because as you know, most producers are schmucks to begin with. But it's another thing for the optical houses to learn — because we give them bigger things to do that have not been achieved or even attempted before.

For example . . . ?

Tidal waves. Now they've been done, but most people don't realise that it's always miniatures affected by the tidal wave — not, as we wanted it, live action, with real people. When you see people inundated by a tidal wave in the old Hurricane film

(1937), it was actually an insert shot of somebody in swirling water — it could have been shot in a bathtub! In our case, we have streets in Hong Kong, where this huge tidal wave comes around the corner and follows running people and overtakes them . . . At least, that is *supposed* to be in the movie. And I think it will be.

How do you manage that trick?

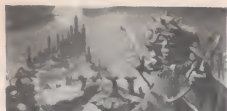
By a rotoscopic process we're working on, so that people will look believable as they are moved down by this huge wave. For a tidal wave to come around a corner, make a left turn and a right turn, then go over screaming people — that's exciting film-making! The things we've done with miniatures — I say "we", it is not me; I'm the one who worries, the other people do



Left: Two of the big name stars who appear in *Meteor*, Sean Connery and Karl Malden. Below: A pre-production painting depicting a flight of American and Soviet missiles heading into space to destroy the *Meteor*.

Left: Henry Fonda plays the President of the United States.

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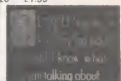
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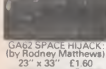
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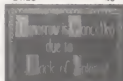
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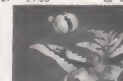
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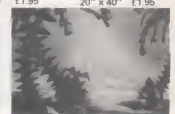
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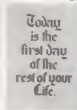
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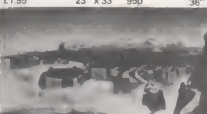
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METEOR

Natalie Wood, Karl Malden, Martin Landau, Brian Keith, Trevor Howard — be buried by all this super effects armoury. Not at all. Ronnie Neame, our director, has been a blessing to us. He's a very responsible man, a very qualified director, but also a great visual eye. People forget, or don't know, that Ronnie was a cinematographer on films like *In Which We Serve* (1942), which Noel Coward

co-directed with David Lean. Ronnie went on to produce four David Lean films, and got his stripes as a director from his visual background. He's made some fine, fine films — I think *Tunes of Glory* (1960) was the best he ever did, a masterpiece of its time. He's always conscious of his actors, strengthening their roles so that the human element would balance out the power of the special effects.

Of which there are many more than you've mentioned.

Yeah, the effects in outer space are so varied and remarkably honest in their appearance. We have a meteor splinter landing in Siberia and causing a lot of snow to melt. A meteor shower over

"The effects in outer space are varied and remarkably honest."

Rome — somehow the Vatican keeps the danger away from Vatican City. Another splinter causes the tidal wave which hits Hong Kong with thousands of extras being engulfed.

That should take care of their boat-people problem. You also destroy New York. What have you got against New York City?

(Laughs). People keep asking me that. My answer is: New York has a lot more box-office than Ohio! At the end of the picture, I have a certain amount of mixed emotions. Shortly after we've killed ten-million Jews in New York City, there is a celebration scene. I don't know what the reaction will be to that!

Your various distributors have all put money into Meteor. How did they react



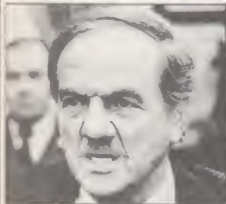
Above: Natalie Wood plays a Soviet astrophysicist working with US scientists to destroy the Meteor. Below: A tense moment as the countdown for the missile launch gets under way.



METEOR

to the delays?

They've all been marvellous. Warner Brothers, who own about 75% of foreign distribution, are still very excited about the film. So is American-International in the United States, Nippon Herald in Japan, Stockholm Film in Sweden and so on. Very important to us because today, every country in the world has a chance of paying very, very good returns



Above: Karl Malden is familiar to tv viewers for his role in *The Streets of San Francisco*. Left: Martin Landau plays General Barry Aldon, a hard-nosed soldier who is opposed to sharing any military secrets with the Russians for any reasons at all.

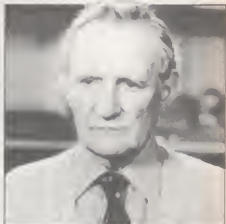
to a producer. If he has an honest distribution. I never worry about the Japanese, they're the most honest people in the world. They don't cheat. The Swedes don't cheat. There are a few countries where you know the odds are very much against you, but I will never mention Italy by name . . . *Meteor* is great for distributors, more of a disaster for the producers. I won't see my profits for four or five years, unless it's a *Star Wars* which I doubt it will be. We're delighted, though with their backing, enthusiasm and endorsement. That's not just politics. We couldn't possibly have managed it on our own; we wouldn't be that dumb. For it has been a terrible picture to make. It looks more than it cost, except it cost

"Meteor looks more than it cost, but cost more than expected."

more than we expected. From that point of view, it's a disaster. No . . . we're only a couple of million dollars overbudget. And that's chickenfeed. I suppose . . . (He winces). For a major picture, a major distributor would get unhappy with that figure and start to harass the producer. But everybody would sleep at night. For an independent production, it has caused

(he laughs) the attempted suicide by my partner, Gabe Katza, on a lot of occasions. He just keeps missing! But, if we go over five more dollars, Gabe's gonna jump! And I told him, if he jumps to take me with him.

(Before any such leap, Sandy Howard returns next month — talking of his new science-fantasy movies *Odyssey* and *Brainstorm*)●



Above: Veteran film actor Trevor Howard is featured in *Meteor* as Sir Michael Hughes, head of Britain's Jodrell Bank observatory from which the course of the *Meteor* is tracked.



Above: Brian Keith and Natalie Wood are trapped in the underground control centre which is destroyed when a chunk of meteorite hits New York. Below: Sean Connery stars as Dr Bradley, top US space scientist.



Above: The evacuation of the wrecked underground control centre is supervised by Dr Bradley (Sean Connery). Below: The Soviets are represented by Natalie Wood and Brian Keith.



ZOMBIES

DAWN OF THE DEAD



Eleven years in the making, the sequel of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, a grisly little sf-oriented horror offering called *Zombie: Dawn of the Dead*, is finally with us.

Starburst's resident reviewer of sickening cinema, the corpse-like John Brosnan (he who reviewed *The Manitou* in issue 8 and *Prophecy* in issue 15) gauges just how nauseating the film is.

Right: Director George A. Romero.



The original title of this picture was *Dawn of the Dead* and it is, of course, a sequel to *Night of the Living Dead*. George A. Romero, the former Pittsburg tv commercial maker, made *Living Dead* back in 1968 and though he's made a number of films since then, such as *Jack's Wife*, *The Affair*, *The Crazies* and *Martin*, it has remained his only real success . . . until *Dawn of the Dead*.

Romero had resisted making a sequel because he had wanted to prove that, as a film maker, he was capable of other things apart from walking corpses. *The Affair* (originally called *There's Always*

Vanilla) was a sentimental romantic drama, Jack's Wife was about a housewife who starts meddling with the occult and becomes obsessed by it; The Crazies, however, was the nearest Romero got to a remake of Living Dead before Zombies, with its story of a small American town hit by a man-made virus that turns its citizens into deranged killers. Then he returned to another small-scale, psychological drama with Martin which concerned a young man who believes he's a vampire. But when none of these films achieved anything like the financial success of Night of the Living Dead it was inevitable that Romero should succumb to the pressure to make a sequel. And with Zombies he's done so with a vengeance!

It's as if Romero was saying: "Okay, you people out there want blood and gore and walking corpses galore . . . well, I'm going to give them to you. I'm going to give you so much gore it's going to be coming out your ears!" And it does. By the end of Zombies I was protesting weakly, "Enough, no more . . . one more shot of a zombie being blasted to pieces and I'm going to deposit my lunch in the

The endless scenes of violence and horror have a cumulative effect that can penetrate the sensibilities of the most blasé of viewers.

lap of the person sitting next to me."

The endless scenes of violence and horror have a cumulative effect that can penetrate the sensibilities of the most blasé of viewers and leave them emotionally drained. That the film manages to do this despite the obvious cynicism with which Romero treats both his material and his audience demonstrates his growing skill as a film maker.

The cynicism is not only evident in the exaggerated heapings of blood and gore but also in the heavy-handed satire and humour that permeates the film. The walking dead are obviously meant to stand as a metaphor for the mindless American masses (which presumably includes the film's audience) and as the setting for all the mayhem Romero has significantly chosen a huge, ultra-modern shopping mall — a "temple to consumerism" — as the publicity hand-out describes it. Surveying the hordes of zombies staggering around the mall's car park one of the four main protagonists asks: "Why do they come here? What do they want?" "Well," comes the reply, "this place was



very important to them when they were alive. I guess it's instinctive." And to press home the point there are, throughout the film, shots of the walking dead staring mindlessly at expensive goods that presumably they once lusted after but are now useless to them.

Much of the humour involving the zombies is less subtle — there are shots of them stumbling into store window dummies; falling into fountains, staggering up escalators and even attempting to play ice hockey. Overall the zombies in Dawn of the Dead are much more pathetic than they were in Living Dead where they were treated purely as a hostile

force. In fact at times you feel quite sorry for them, particularly in the sequence where the shopping mall is invaded by an army of Hell's Angels who start blasting away at them indiscriminately, not for reasons of survival but simply for fun.

But though on one level *Zombies* works as a black comedy (very black) it also works as a true horror film. Romero judges his shocks and horrific set-pieces with all the skill of a veteran, which he is now, and there are a number of sequences that are truly memorable. The most horrific scene, in my opinion, occurs in the early part of the film when we see a gas-masked, heavily armed SWAT team blast their way into a black apartment where the inhabitants have been hiding their dead instead of turning the bodies over to the authorities for burning as ordered. Two members of the SWAT team find the room where the corpses are hidden and the sight that meets their eyes, and ours, is like something straight out of hell — a whole roomful of writhing corpses, in various stages of decomposition, some straining against ropes, some struggling within their shrouds like giant worms — others gnawing on human arms and other unidentifiable sections of anatomy. "You want nausea?" Romero is saying, "Well, here it is . . ."

A word about the actual amount of violence in the film — the version I saw did have some obvious cuts but not enough to make much difference to the film. Presumably these cuts were made by the distributors themselves and it's possible that our beloved censor will order more cuts before the film goes out on release in January. If he does it will be a shame, as well as a disgrace, because, as I mentioned earlier, it's the cumulative effect of all the blood and gore that gives the film its impact and is also necessary for the satirical points that Romero is trying to make. One thing is certain — don't wait for it to turn up on tv. If ITV ever showed it, judging by the way they hack films about these days (hands up all those who are still wondering what happened to Jack Nicholson's nose in *Chinatown*?) *Zombies* would have a running time of ten minutes.

Looked at on a purely technical level *Zombies*, despite a relatively low budget, is quite an achievement. Apart from the added colour it is a much slicker production than *Night of the Living Dead* which, by comparison, was little more than a feature-length amateur film. Romero's decision to set the film in the giant shopping mall was a stroke of genius — not only does it serve as a disturbingly incongruous setting for a nightmare, which reinforces the nightmare element, but its cavernous halls filled with luxury goods automatically adds to the picture's production values. Romero is also well served by his four principal players —



Left: The SWAT team member, Stephen (David Emge) becomes a member of the Living Dead after a zombie attack. Below: Stephen's partner, Peter (Ken Foree), prepares to defend himself from the zombies.



David Emge, Ken Foree, Scott Reiniger and Gaylen Ross — who portray the two SWAT members; the helicopter pilot and his pregnant girlfriend who take refuge in the top floor of the mall are able to defend their luxurious sanctuary quite effectively until, inevitably, *Things Go Wrong* . . . But the real star of the movie is Tom Savini, the make-up and special effects man who achieves miracles. I've never seen simulated human flesh look so realistic before and the scenes where people have large chunks bitten out of their necks, arms, legs etc are enough to turn the strongest stomach. And in this one picture Savini must use more exploding blood capsules than Peckinpah has used in his entire career . . .

To sum up, with *Zombies* Romero has

made a successful three-pronged attack on three major American obsessions — guns, gore and goodies — while making a classic horror film at the same time. In a sense he's made the ultimate 'American' movie.

Zombies (1979)

David Emge (as Stephen), Ken Foree (Peter), Scott Reiniger (Roger), Gaylen Ross (Francine).

Written and Directed by George A. Romero, Director of Photography Michael Gornick, Assistant Producer Donna Siegel, Assistant Director Christine Forrest, Music by The Goblins with Dario Argento, Production Manager Zilla Clinton, Sound Recordist Tony Buba, Wardrobe Josie Caruso, Makeup and Cosmetic Special Effects by Tom Savini, Lighting Director Carl Auguststein, Edited by George A. Romero, Produced by Richard P. Rubenstein. A Target International Pictures Release in the UK.

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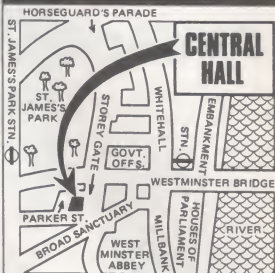
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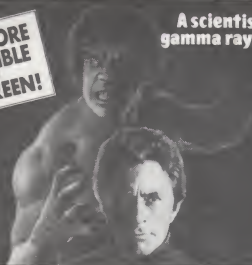


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INTERVIEW PART 1

CREW OF THE LIBERATOR

Blake's 7 returns for its third season, but regular followers are going to notice a number of startling changes in the show's line-up. Gone is the main star — Gareth Thomas as Blake, and also Jenna, played by Sally Knyvette. Added, are two newcomers to the series, Steven Pacey as Tarrant and Josette Simon as Dayna.

Ralph Scott was invited along to the BBC Studios during the taping of the new season's fourth episode *City at the Edge of the World* to talk to Blake regulars Paul Darrow, winner of the 1978 Starburst best actor award, Michael Keating and Jan Chappell, and the two new members of the crew.

PAUL DARROW

During a break in the afternoon rehearsals I began by taking the opportunity to speak to Paul Darrow — Kerr Avon.

Starburst: Firstly may I congratulate you on winning the Starburst Award.

Paul Darrow: Thank you, it was a great thrill for me to receive it! Was Avon in Blake's 7 your first science fiction role?

No, I did *Dr Who* many years ago, in which I played a captain who was cylluvionised (laughter). And of course I'd done a lot of television and repertory theatre before and after. I didn't

have an interest in science fiction at all at that time, but I have built up a moderate interest since Blake. I've read books by Asimov and the like.

How did you first get involved in Blake's 7?

I was asked to come and see the producers. I didn't know anything about it — not even that it was science fiction. When I arrived I was told that Blake was an engineer, so I thought it was going to be another *Plane Makers* series, if you



remember that. Anyway they eventually told me about this character and said they thought I could play it. For a couple of months I waited around, read a few scripts and decided I liked it. They seemed to like me, so they gave me the part.

And has the character developed as you've intended? Avon appears to be very much the rebel.

Not so much the rebel, but very much his own man. Nobody tells him what to do and gets away with it. To quote John Wayne — "Nobody knocks over my glass of milk and gets away with it!" Have you ever noticed that Avon rarely smiles? During the filming of the first series we had got up to episode ten before the director took me to one side and asked if this was deliberate. It is deliberate — I limit Avon to one smile per episode.

How much of Avon is Paul Darrow?

I think Avon is a lot like I would want to be, but not as cold and ruthless. You see you have to put him in the circumstances that the programme presents, he's living in an extraordinary situation and you've got to be an extraordinary person to be able to cope. He's also a genius at self-preservation and completely self-centred. I don't think I am, I hope I'm not. I do have an affection for him though. He does things we wish we'd thought of doing in a certain situation, and he's not afraid of anything. He's not even afraid of death.

I have been very fortunate in that I have been able to develop Avon as I see him. Terry Nation created the original outline and has been pleased with my portrayal and development of the character.

Let's talk about the new series, with Blake — Gareth Thomas — gone how has this changed it for you?

Quite a lot from the point of view of my character. The pressure is off Avon so to speak, in as much as although he had a respect for Blake, there was a great deal of feeling there, and Gareth — who's a very good actor — and I worked very well together. So it's changed quite a lot in that the Liberator is now Avon's and the relationships are changing all the time, with the new people who come in. The format is slightly different — not greatly, but one is not up against the Federation all the time, one is up against other forces... against other baddies, or maybe other goodies, remember — Blake's 7 are criminals! *Do you think people will accept the new series without Blake?*

Yes, I think so. Blake is still mentioned and his influence is still there, and we are still Blake's 7. For example, the Queen's Hussars are still the Queen's Hussars even when the Queen isn't there.

Without revealing too many secrets, can

you say how the two new characters, Tarrant and Dayna, come into the series?

It starts off following the battle that had begun at the end of the last series. That battle is now over and we're in a bit of trouble with the Liberator, and I hope I don't give too much away when I say we have to abandon it for a short period of time while it repairs itself. We get separated and I land upon a particular planet and get rescued by a girl who looks after me when I'm being attacked by natives. This is Dayna.



When we eventually get back to the ship we meet Tarrant but there is a very good twist to this that I would rather not give away.

Will we be seeing more relationships between the crew in this series?

Yes we will. There hasn't been any form of shall we say sexual relationships in the past. You're now getting a little of that creeping in. The relationships that developed between the crew basically remain the same. But there are other characters who come in from episode to episode and indeed in this story we are doing now, Vila falls in love, which is all rather charming. Avon wouldn't approve but still...

Later on I have a relationship of a kind. I don't know with whom yet, I haven't seen the script!

It's nice to see this kind of development.

Yes it is. I don't think the powers-that-be thought it would be as successful as it has been, or as popular, or would have created as much interest as it has.

People who are interested in Blake's 7 let the BBC know about it. I've had thousands of letters.

What difference, if any, does that make in the production of the series?

The BBC standard is obviously very high. There is a lack of money every-

Opposite: The new crew of the Liberator. Left to right: Jan Chappell (as Calyl), Steven Pacey (Tarrant), Paul Darrow (Avon), Michael Keating (Vila) and Josette Simon (Dayna). Above: A bearded Avon! Below: Dayna shows that she is as capable as any of the Liberator crew members.

where, and particularly in an organization like this. This is an expensive show to do, and to do it really well as, say, *Star Trek* it would have to go on to film. Well if you suddenly did that, you would be spending a lot of money and a lot of time and the BBC, or I doubt any other company, could do it, so within finances I think they do very well. *Would you like to see a feature film made of it?*

Yes I would, I think it would be a really good thing.

Do you think Blake's 7 would have a good market in America where even now Dr Who has taken off in a big way?

I don't see why it shouldn't, we would certainly like it to anyway, the wider audience we can reach the better. *Do you think that Blake's 7 will go on to further series even without Blake?* It's possible, depending on popularity of this next series which could be the best yet! Getting away from the Federation gives us much more scope and more baddies to come up against.

Would you give any message to Blake's 7 followers watching this new season. Enjoy!



JAN CHAPPELL

As Paul was called away to rehearse another scene, I was joined by actress Jan Chappell who plays Cally, and Jan began telling me how she became a member of *Blake's 7*.

Jan Chappell: David Maloney, the producer of *Blake's 7*, saw me in a play at the Royal Court Theatre in London's Sloane Square, along with David Jackson who was also appearing in the same production. We were both auditioned and as a result we were signed up for the series as Cally and Gan.

How do you feel not having Blake and Jenna alongside you in the new series?

Well of course I miss them, Sally in particular because we got on so well, in fact we are friends now. As far as our two new members are concerned it's still a time of discovery for me as we haven't done that many scenes together yet.

Without giving too much away, can you say what we can expect of Cally in this new series?

Cally will be doing more, and from the scripts I have seen her powers of telepathy will be used, which pleases me — it's fun! Again I feel in the previous scripts this could have been exploited more, emphasizing that Cally is an Alien. I'm not sure I'll be having any love scenes, certainly not before the sixth episode.

Left: Jacqueline Pearce, who plays the villainess Servalen, with guest star Michael Gough. Above: Jan Chappell as Cally, a humanoid alien who has telepathic powers.



MICHAEL KEATING

Back to the rehearsals. It's a long hard day on the *Blake's 7* set! Rehearsals begin mid-morning, and continue throughout the day until 6 in the evening. Make-up begins an hour later, and video taping starts at 7.30, running through until 10.00pm. The studio is then descended upon by workers and cleaners working overnight to prepare the floor for the following day's shooting — be it *Blake's 7* or another production. Because of this an actor's schedule can be very tight indeed, but having spoken to both Paul Darrow and Jan Chappell I managed to corner Michael Keating, who plays Vila, in the BBC Club during the evening recess, to talk to him about his role on *Blake's 7*. *Starburst: Have you enjoyed playing the character of Vila?*



Above: Tarrant (Steven Pacey), surrounded by security guards, makes a break for freedom.



Michael Keating: Yes indeed I have, he has a great personality. *Even though he's sometimes thought to be a fool and a coward.* Underneath it all he really is quite brave, he expresses a lot of fears and worries, but comes through in the end. Vila represents a side of me I think. In the fact we are both very careful, indeed you could say that Michael Keating is Vila, I'm sure Paul would agree! *What's in store for Vila in this new series?*

This series is going to expand Vila's character, the episode we're filming now is very important for me — I fall in love and, well... wait and see! *Do you miss Gareth Thomas on the set?* He's a great friend, so yes I do. However the character of Vila would miss Paul more if he left, because we have this

rapport, he being Avon the genius, and I the down-to-earth Vila. Our roles offset each other. An example being the *Gambit* episode towards the end of the last series when Paul and I miniaturize Orac and break the bank of an intergalactic gambling den. *Would you like to do any other science fiction?* I wouldn't mind, I'd rather appear in *Star Wars*, but I take offers as they come. *Blake's 7* is hard work, it takes up a six day week, but it's very enjoyable and I enjoy hard work.

Below left: Michael Keating plays Vila in the third series of Blake's 7. Below right: A portrait of a rising young star, Steven Pacey is the latest addition to the crew of the Liberator, Tarrant. Above: The stars of Blake's 7 relax between takes on the set.

STEVEN PACEY

Steven Pacey, the new male Severn, looks very much a member of *Blake's 7* with his tall commanding figure, curly hair and crisp voice.

His career spans back to the age of eleven, working in the theatre, though he never attended a drama school, and culminated in *The Winslow Boy* in London alongside Kenneth More.

On the set Steven looks very much like a younger Roj Blake, but as he stresses in the interview the two characters are completely different. *Starburst: Who is Tarrant?*

Steven Pacey: I think this is going to be very confusing for ardent fans of *Blake's 7* who will take the new character for a substitute Blake, which in fact he is not. Blake was an idealist, while Tarrant is very much the mercenary. He enjoys the battles, the adventures, where as Blake always had a goal Tarrant is quite happy to take risks for no other reason than say, revenge.

In watching Tarrant aboard the Liberator set he appears to have become the new leader.

Yes he does appear rather bossy, doesn't he! I suppose it is by virtue of being the pilot, he does tend to make a lot of decisions about course and firing instructions, as opposed to Avon. *Going back to episode one of the first series, the man who originally betrayed Blake to the Federation was called Tarrant. Is it the same character you play?*

No, this is strictly a coincidence. There



was also speculation that I was Del Grant from the last series, again I am not.

How do you see Tarrant's relationship with Avon?

There should be a better relationship between Tarrant and Avon than between Blake and Avon. We are always at loggerheads, though we do have our moments. It's a conflict of egos to a great extent. They have a mutual respect for each other.

So you see this season doing well.

Yes indeed, it's going to do great guns!

JOSETTE SIMON

Josette Simon is the second new face to join the *Liberator* crew.

Josette Simon is a new face to television, indeed this is her first role since leaving drama school — she was spotted (as is any young actresses' dream) when along with other drama students she did camera rehearsals for another BBC television series — *Star Turn Challenge*. *Starburst: How does Dayna come to join the crew of the Liberator?*

Josette Simon: Dayna came from Earth originally, and was taken to another planet by her father and brought up there, Sarra being the name of the planet. Dayna specializes, and enjoys playing with weapons — hunting people and killing them. Quite an aggressive person really. But later on I develop into something more human. If I was aggressive and unemotional right through it would become quite boring. *Do you feel in anyway that you are stepping into the shoes of Sally Knyvette?*

I have thought about it, but I don't really know much about the character of Jenna, so I don't feel I'm stepping into her shoes because I'm not stepping into the same kind of part. Granted there were two women in the crew, and there are now, but that is as far as it goes and I hope that Blake's 7 fans see it that way.



Above: Malcolm Bullivant as Bersher in the Blake's 7 episode "Volcano". Above right: Josette Simon plays Dayna, the latest addition to the crew of the *Liberator*.

Do you see yourself as a young idealistic terrorist?

We are not really young terrorists, as I've said: I mellow out quite dramatically in fact. Steven is the swashbuckling type which I think young boys may identify with, but it's not to say the others are geriatric though, it's nice to have young fresh blood amongst the crew.

PETER TUDDENHAM

Tucked away in a small black kiosk behind the set of the *Liberator* sits actor Peter Tuddenham, who supplies the voice of Zen and Orac.

Peter comes from East Anglia and has made a study of Anglian dialects in his work, supplying many voices and advising on dialects for television and radio including Anglia television's *Backs to the Land* playing the landlord and advising the cast, in Arnold Wesker's theatrical play *The Wedding Feast* and in Sir Peter Hall's film *Akenfield*.

He has done numerous radio plays and for two years was a member of the BBC repertory theatre, becoming Zen after auditioning for *Blake's 7*'s first director Vere Lorrimer. Starburst: *How was the voice of Zen conceived?*

Peter Thuddenham: Vere didn't know what sort of voice he wanted, so I, along with other actors gave several ideas on what we thought were suitable computer voices. Not like a Dalek, the voice had to be a human type, but slightly metallic, and I was lucky enough to be chosen.

What did you base your ideas on for the voice?

Well nothing really, the lines are fairly human lines, not like a Dalek language, so I just gave what I thought was a reasonable idea and they liked it! I must admit this is the first time I've done a computer voice, but the response has been tremendous, I get a lot of letters, very nice ones, and people want photographs — I don't know why but they want to see what I look like.

I'm sure many people are surprised to discover that you are Orac as well.

Yes indeed, I was asked to do Orac after it was decided he was to become a permanent part of the show. Originally he was only going to be in one episode, and I think the actor who played him when he first appeared didn't wish to continue as just a voice, though I could be wrong about this. Anyway I was asked to do it, and I gave a like imitation of his voice, but with a little

of me as well. It seems to have been successful, I'm glad to say.

Orac is very human, almost another member of the crew.

I've tried to make him tetchy, rather like — "These humans! they should know all about this!" and that sort of thing. The writers have written this sort of character, I interpret what they write, though lines may have been changed at rehearsals by the script editor or director. I don't change them at all. *What is in store for the two computers this season?*

I do not know, I have not received the final scripts yet. However some interesting things are going to happen to Orac, though I'm not going to reveal anything. *I was thinking of a possible rivalry building up between the two computers.* Well in the episode *Dawn of the Gods* Orac and Zen have a scene to themselves, only a small one but its quite interesting I usually record Orac before taping, and speak Zen's lines along with the other actors.

Is this your first venture into science fiction?

It is. And I would like to do more. I'll do anything they ask me to do to the best of my ability. It's a lovely life because you never get stale ●



Above: Dayna (Josette Simon), Tarrant (Steven Pacey) and Bershar (Malcolm Bullivant) are captured by sinister security guards in the episode "Volcano". Left: Jacqueline Pearce and veteran tv and film actor Michael Gough on the set of *Blake's 7*.

THINGS TO COME

The latest news and happenings in the worlds of cinema and television science fantasy
compiled by Tony Crawley.

SON OF ALIEN

An *Alien* sequel is afoot. Or a claw... So far, talk is all it comes down to until the new 20th Century-Fox executives get their act together and finally sort out their hits from their misses.

Three of the original film's producers are concerned with the new plans. The two partners of The Phoenix Company, David Giler and Walter Hill — plus Gordon Carroll. Between them they form Brandywine Productions, one of the film combines concerned with the production of *Alien*. There are, however, a few problems to be worked out first. One is that the Phoenix duo are leaving the shelter of the Fox studio, although they still have four projects bubbling on the Fox stove. With the possibility of a fifth — and that would be *Alien 2*, or whatever they choose to call it.

Another aggravation is that the Fox studio itself is still going through the angst of a management shake-up following the departure (some say, defection) of the head production chiefs, the guys who okayed *Star Wars* and *Alien* among so many Fox triumphs in recent years — Alan Ladd Jr., Jay Kenter and Gareth Wigan. They flew the coop to set up their own independent production hatch, the first egg from which will be Paul Newman's thriller *Madonne Red*.

David Giler, scenarist of such movies as *The Black Bird* (which he also directed), *The Parallax View*, *Fun With Dick and Jane* and *Myra Breckenridge*, and Walter Hill (writer-director of *The Warriors*, *The Driver*, writer of *The Getaway* and *The Mackintosh Man*), have been discussing the form an *Alien 2* script would take. Both men in fact added much to the Dan O'Bannon script of the original film — too much so, according to O'Bannon, who has since announced his own new sf film, *Dead and Buried*, with the other *Alien* producer, Ronald Shusett.

But as David Giler reports about the sequel idea, so far for the new Fox chieftains "haven't told us if they want to do it yet." If they refuse it, I prophesy another upheaval of the Fox high-ups very rapidly indeed... I This is one property Fox would not want to lose. And one that The Ladd Company would be only too pleased to pick up, I'm sure.

SPAGHETTI ALIEN

Meanwhile, the Italians — and who else? — have already got into the sequel act. Rome producers Angiolino Stelli and Ciro Ippolito say their *Alien 2* project will be completed and ready for world release by January. "Alien is stalking the earth," runs their publicity hype. "Now, you can be the next victim."



Or then again the producers will be, once the Fox guys go to court to stop them using their hit title. Stealing their ideas is one thing... but demmitell sir, a title is sacrosanct!

SPIELBERG'S COMING

Steven Spielberg — the little man with the enormous reputation — will make his next movie in London. If, that is, he ever stops fiddling about with the last minute and post-preview re-editing of his (allegedly) zany comedy, 1941. The brash *wunderkind*'s 1980 plans include two films from the same writer who polished up the late Leigh Brackett's *Empire Strikes Back* scenario: Lawrence Kasdan. Or Larry to his friends. And with both Lucas and Spielberg utilising him, he has some very influential pals in Hollywood.

Kasdan will be making his own directing debut this year with his script of *Body Heat*. By that time Spielberg will be in London, using the Lucasfilm British home of Elnora studios from March or April, to helm the Kasdan version of the George Lucas-Philip Kaufman story, *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Once that is in the can — after, no doubt, another example of frenzied re-editing, 1941 style — Spielberg sticks with the Kasdan trail on a project titled *Continental Divide*.

Meanwhile, back in Hollywood, shooting

has begun on the latest Spielberg-John Milius production, *Used Cars* — written, produced and directed by Steve's discoveries Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale. The film has Jack Warden in a dual role and top stars Kurt Russell, John Carpenter's Elvis.

MEYER'S FIRE

Nicholas Meyer is a director to watch... As I trust we already know he's a writer not to be missed, either. A one-time film publicist, pushing *Love Story* among other pap, he first proved himself as a scenarist with his riveting reconstruction of Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre Company's radio version of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* on October 30, 1938 — in Joe Sergeant's tele-flick, *The Night that Panicked America*. He loves mucking about with his history in a fantasy fashion and now makes a winning debut as a film maker with *Time After Time*. The next time-war thriller has H.G. Wells chasing Jack The Ripper all over San Francisco in 1979. It's from a story by one of Meyer's college chums, who was inspired by Meyer's last film, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (directed in Britain by Herbert Ross) which had Sherlock Holmes meeting Dr Sigmund Freud!

Why does Meyer go in for such odd, and old couplings? "Because they tend to speak good English."

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though, find time to fit in a short episode with Roger Moore in the four-country view of man at liberty for a weekend, Sunday Lover (Gina Wilder will represent America). Jolly Roger, too, is well tied up before he returns to Bond-duty. While he's walked out of a teaming with Farrah Fawcett in *Strictly Business* (the film is now shelved as a result), Moore is booked for *The Sea Wolves* with Peck and Niven, and then takes off (literally) for *The High Road To China*, which director Brian Hutton (Where Eagles Dare) has taken over from John Huston.

BONDAGE II

The American James Bond — that's the boast of Quinn Martin's new tv series, *A Man Called Sloane*, with Robert Conrad, ex-Centennial, ex-Duke, as a macho secret agent with plenty of girls and gadgets. Dan O'Hairly plays his boss, although he gets his orders from a computer with a sexy voice (a neat reversal of *Charlie's Angels*, not to mention *Mission Impossible*). Conrad is assisted in his weekly derring-do by the gigantic Ji-Tu Cimbuka, complete with a steel head, as if he needs it. Conrad glides through all the mirth and mayhem as if he's done it all before. And he has, of course. As James West in *The Wild Wild West*... Which I seem to recall was hyped as the Wild West's James Bond! In America television, only the nemes are changed to protect the uninspired writers...

CHINA SEA DROME

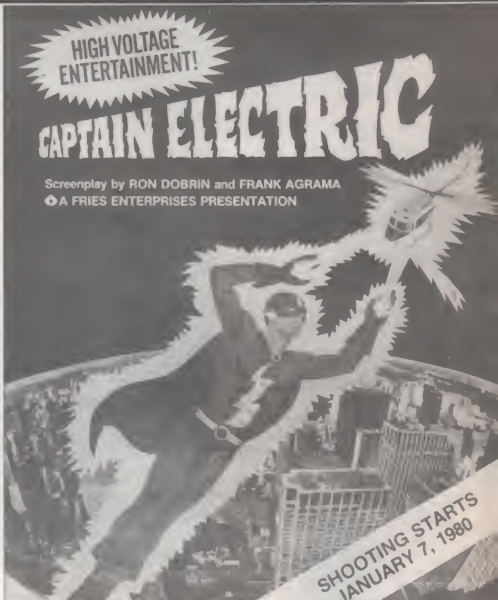
Surprise, surprise. *The Man From Atlantis* is the first American tv series sold to China. The deal was made with the Chinese Central Television Station of Baikung. Oh come on, of course you remember the show. That's the one with Patrick Duffy and Barinda Montgomey...

LUCAS MUSIC

George's Lucasfilm has launched two new music publishing combines in partnership with 20th Century-Fox Music Publishing. Banthe Music is one. Tusken Music is the other, designed to tend, and no doubt cultivate, the majesty of the new John Williams scores for *The Empire Strikes Back* — which will be released as we all know by now, on Robert Stigwood's RSD label. Looks like everyone's getting their cut...

JERRY CAN'T

Keep the Jerry Lewis poster we ran on this column in Starburst 12. For now it looks as if the film in question will never be made. Personally, I'm shuddering no tears. Did we really want a Jerry Lewis farce called *Hardly Working Attacks Star Wars*? Jerry has had immense difficulty in obtaining money to complete the editing and other post-production of his movie



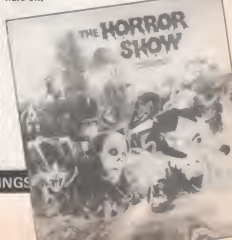
Above: The promotional art for the latest superhero movie from Charles (Spider-Man) Fries. Below: The poster for the Universal compilation film *The Horror Show*. Opposite above: Claudia Jennings, tragically killed in a road accident in Malibu (see Obituary). Opposite below: The ad art for a new horror offering *The Snake*.

comeback, *Hardly Working*, and his next assignment, *That's Life*, has been shelved after a weak shooting. Now unless *Hardly Working* — his first film for eight years — becomes a major triumph for him, Jerry will hardly win the loot for his proposed galeatic sequel. Couldn't have happened to a nicer fellow...

HORROR TRIP

Not content with scaring the living daylight out of their studio tourists, Universal is releasing a winning compilation film detailing sixty "magical years" of movie monsters. Anthony Perkins is the host of *The Horror Show*, collated, produced and directed by *Time* film critic Richard Schickel. Clips include the old team of Boris and Bale, of course, plus some Lughton (Mr and Mrs), Claude Rains,

Lon Chaney, Snr and Jr, Vincent Price and Chris Lee, John Berrymore, Robert Shaw (Robert Shaw? Oh I see a *Jaws* item!) and taking that fateful shower, Janet Leigh. Sounds a must for every Fantasy Film Convention from here on.



SPACE WORLD

Stand by for the latest American leisure dome — Space World. This is a million dollar theatre complex, based on the NASA simulator, which will give you the feeling of space flight, weightlessness and all. Due to open in New York in 1981, and thereafter around the world over the next five years, Space World is basically an hydraulically controlled theatre, using the maximum gravitational forces allowed for commercial purposes by the Federal Aviation Administration. Film producer-director Joseph Strick (*Ulysses*, etc) is in charge of the project, a combination of three theatres — two that move via computer programming in time with movies depicting space travel. The foyer will be designed as a space port, beyond that a 76-seat theatre will be used for a pre-flight briefing, and indeed pre-flight medicals to see if the paying customer can live through the coming experience. And two 38 seat theatres will simulate blast-off and whizzing through the heavens. The computer has already been overworking, itemizing that the Space World will deal with 300 people an hour, 80 hours a week, at 3.50 dollars a head, grossing 84,000 bucks a week and that means a profit of 21,000 dollars right there.

Personally I could take it or leave it. In fact I'll await the obvious film version of what goes wrong. Airport style. When the theatres spin out of control end take off for real...

STAR WORLD

London will also have a new tourist attraction, soon. The huge wine cellars beneath the London Palladium are being converted into a collection of nostalgic stage and screen attractions: a Western movie street, a crypt of movie horrors, a display of Hollywood sea adventures, a replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, a silent film area and a gallery of movie rogues with more than a hundred life size figures. The man behind the scheme is our old friend, Michael Carreras, the Hammer Films chief. Must say while it all sounds fine enough, it could have been rather more British... What's a High Noon street or Hollywood seven seas number got to do with Argyle Street or the London Palladium?

CHUCK'S CARTOONS

For the first time in ten years, Warner Brothers are making cartoon programmers again. (Well, they can afford to. In the first nine months of last year, their films earned a staggering total of over 332 million-dollars — the best figure in the studio's 56 year history). Chuck Jones, who else, is taking charge of the new cartoons, and so one is a new Roadrunner short. More important to Messrs Spielberg and Lucas is that Chuck is also making a sequel to their favourite cartoon, *Duck Dodgers in the 24th Century*. Title: What else but *Duck Dodgers and the Return to the 24th Century*.



OBITUARY

Willis Goldbeck, co-screenwriter of *Todd Browning's Freaks* (1932) has died aged 80 in Long Island, New York. A writer, producer and director since the earliest days of Hollywood (he flew with the British in World War I), he worked on most of the original *Dr Kildare* films and produced two of John Ford's final movies *Sergeant Rutledge* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*... Catharina Lacay, doyenne of the British stage and screen, died aged 75; her first movie was the original *Lady Vanishes* (1938), and she was Boris Karloff's wife in *Michael Reeves' The Sorcerers* (1967)... And tragically in the very week her Roger Corman movie, *Deathport*, opened in London, 29 year old beauty, Claudia Jennings, was killed in a head-on road smash in Malibu. A Playboy Playmate of the Year in 1970, Claudia (real name: Mimi Chesterton) made a name for herself in innumerable cheap-jack movies for several of the Corman ilk: *The Unholy Roller*, *Truck Stop Woman*, etc, and co-starred with David Carradine in *Deathport*, the Corman's company's sequel to *Death Race 2000*...

Les Clark, 71, the last of the Disney team who worked on the first Mickey Mouse cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, in 1929, has died of cancer in retirement in Santa Barbara. Les went to work for Walt Disney straight after leaving school on March 15, 1927, and worked on all the Disney classics from *Snow White* and the *Seven Dwarfs* to *The Rescuers*...

Production of a new American horror-fantasy, *The Bloodthirsty Monster*, was delayed in Cleveland, following the sudden death of producer Herman I. Spero, aged 55.

MAC'S FLIP

Paramount might find better tv fortune in a new script from John D. MacDonald. Best known as the author of the Travis McGee private-eye thrillers, MacDonald has completed an sf item called *The Girl, The Gold Watch and Everything*. Subject: a watch that can suspend time — and does so. Amazing what these quartz things can do, isn't it?

FRANKEN_____

Just fill in the blank. Yeah, *Frankenstein* is back on the prowl again. For an NBC-TV movie this time. Marvin Chomsky directs *The Franken Project* which features Robert Vaughn as the fourth generation descendant of Dr Victor F. And up to no good, I'll be bound! Certainly makes a change of pace from Vaughn's recent work. He's been touring the United States, Leonard Nimoy style — in a one-man show about President Roosevelt.

SCANNING

Update on David Cronenberg's most expensive Canadian sf film, *Scanners*. It's about a group of people born in the 1940s, all exposed to some kind of drug, which enables them as adults to scan people's minds. Not that it stops there. "The powers they possess are terrifying," adds a Cronenberg aide. "Today, they have decided to take over. The nightmare has begun when extrasensory powers become weapons of destruction." Sounds to me like *Son of the Fury*.

QUICKIES

Toronto's Nalvana Films doing well with sales of their animation special, *Intergalactic Thanksgiving or Please Don't Eat The Planet*... Ernest Borgnine goes from *The Black Hole* to *Danny, The Super Snooper* with Italy's big, burly Bud Spencer... Dino De Laurentiis has had a new 24 kilowatt studio lamp named after him by cinematographer Gil Taylor; so now the Dino lamp will join the brutes and dogs and other oddly named arcs... Flash's gorgeous Italian playmate Ornella Muti is somehow fitting in her London space work with two new movies in Rome. She obviously travels back and forth by rocket... Latest American sf movie notion is *Spaca Coach*, which puts the John Ford/John Wayne classic Western, *Stage Coach* (1939) into the heavens. Doesn't it make you want to puka...?



YAMATO AND SHIPS

Humble Pie Department. There I was, way back in Starburst 2, ridiculing Japan's Space Cruiser Yamato movie. The farce, I dubbed it, as opposed to George Lucas' Force. Well, it transpires that old Yamato had quite a considerable force of its own. The first two Yamato movies have cleaned up in Japan and various international territories, including Latin America, and Yoshinobu Nishizaki's Academy Productions of Tokyo have now picked up 3 million dollars in America by selling the tv series version to some 55 independent stations. In tele-form, Yamato is called Star Blazer and comprises some 52 half-hour episodes — a fact that was, alas, all too clear in the first movie.

In December, Nishizaki begins work on Yamato III. Then, he intends making a live-action version as well. He's already been shopping in Washington for some old unused or unwanted American battleship. The US Navy Department, it seems, doesn't quite go for this idea. If he can't find his battleship, Mr Nishizaki says he will utilise his own 120ft cruiser, instead. Damned clever, these Japanese.

CHEEKY

Can't resist this item. Hear tell Lord Lew Grade's US-tv combine is making a tv-film about a young cop. Title: *Saved Off Justice*.

SON OF QUICKIES

Robin Williams will be working most of his Popeya film in Malta... After Flash Gordon, director Mike Hodges will shoot his own script of *Say Goodnight Lilian*, *Goodnight*... Italy gets back into the Jaws trade with *Frenco Nero* as *The Shark Hunter*... John Carpenter's *Better Late Than Never* tv movie script about old folks breaking out of a geriatric home, finally aired in America; actor Richard Crenna directed; badly... Also released on the US tube: *Captain America* and Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* both as two-part movies... Divina Newton John's new film, *Xanadu*, is officially called a fantasy-musical, oh dear...

RESPITE

Brian De Palma takes a well earned (much needed) rest from pyrotechnical fantasy and reverts to his earliest form of zany cinema in his latest release, *Home Movies*, unveiled recently at the Edinburgh festival. This is the film he first told us about, however briefly, in *Starburst* 5. Reminiscent of his gallows humour comedies, *Greetings and Hi Mom*, the film is a unique case of a top-flight director encouraging youngsters into movie-making, and judging by the fun result everyone — De Palma and his *Fury* star, Kirk Douglas, included — had a ball. De Palma was taking a class at the Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Subject: The making and selling of an independent film. How better to teach them then to get his class out on the streets making a film and then selling it — which is exactly what they did. Kirk Douglas plays a very Godardian guru, running a cult called *Star Therapy* with the motto: "Put your name over the title". He's continually filming himself, his life, his every move — just one of the various films within the film within the film of *Home Movies*.

George Lucas proves the real guru of the project, however. "George told me, *You should go out there and just make a picture with a bunch of kids — be just terrific*," explains Brian. "So I just got started. The only way to do something is to start doing it. I took the time off, pushed everything else back and went ahead and did it. It was hard work because I was dealing with all kids and non-professionals. But we got through it. It's a comedy, so it's really hard to describe... It came from a story I'd written and worked up into a screenplay in screenwriting class, and the kids worked in all aspects of the production from actors to producers and assistant directors... I tried to show them what to do if you had to work with what you could lay your hands on." Not many film classes can lay hands on Kirk Douglas, Brian De Palma, nor indeed Mrs De Palma, Nancy Allan. She has the best role of her film life in the movie. Dr it's the best until she completes her return to terror tactics in *Dressed To Kill* with Michael Caine and Angie Dickinson.

Right and below: Caught at a recent signing at a fantasy bookshop in London, creator/Artist of *Eagle's* Dan Dare, Frank Hampson. Frank was signing copies of the recently published *Best of the Eagle* collection and Dan Dare: The Man from Nowhere.



RESPIRE II

Encouraged no doubt by De Palma's return to a small film, Steven Spielberg is reactivating his plans to make *After School*, a project influenced by Francois Truffaut's *L'Argent de poche*. Once 1941 is fully in the bag, Spielberg goes off to his old home town, Phoenix, Arizona, to shoot the 28-day film for 1.5 million dollars — about the cost of each big stunt in 1941. "It's about suburban children, gangs of kids, between 3pm when they get out of school and when they get home for supper at 6pm. They're really young adults, street smart, discovering drugs at ten, sex at eleven and a lot of it is gretty to do with the influence of television on children today. How they live out the fantasies of *Charlie's Angels* — how that becomes the most important thing in those after school hours."

"We've all been talking about doing a small film again," explains Brian De Palma. "But then George got very involved with *Star Wars*, of course and producing three pictures: *More American Graffiti*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *French Postcards*. Steven was always set to go on his project. I sat in when he was casting. He was into heavy pre-production and I don't know exactly why he stopped, whether it was script problems or pressure to start on 1941. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that I have a lot of experience in making low-budget



Above: The original promotional poster for the Steven Spielberg comedy movie 1941.

movies while Steven was brought up in a very structured system. George knows a lot about it, also. I mean, if he makes pictures like *Star*

Wars, he makes them like he made *THX 1138*, almost like a student working on everything. I mean he just works on everything!"

THINGS TO COME +++ THINGS TO COME +++ THINGS TO COME +++ THINGS TO COME +++ THINGS TO COME +++ THINGS TO COME

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE OF STARBURST



SATURN 3

The making of a new sf film starring Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett (Majors).

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BLAKE'S



INTERVIEW PART 2 PRODUCER DAVID MALONEY

BACK IN STARBURST 6, WE SPOKE WITH WRITER TERRY NATION ABOUT HIS TV SERIES *BLAKE'S 7*. THIS ISSUE, JOHN FLEMING TALKS TO THE CREATIVE FORCE BEHIND THE SERIES, BBC TV PRODUCER DAVID MALONEY.

David Maloney started as a journalist on the Birmingham Evening Despatch, then went on to train in the Birmingham Repertory Theatre School. For eight years, he worked around the country as an actor. He says he found stage work in London's West End "very boring — the same part for months on and". But, at the same time, acting was a very insecure profession, so he joined BBC TV as a floor manager.

One of the shows he worked on was the *Dr Who* series starring William Hartnell. He remembers that "characters used to stand around the control panel and talk at great, great length in the early part of the series. The characters talked incessantly. And the plots were dependent on character: the character of Hartnell".

After a few years floor managing, Maloney went on the BBC director training course and then "did all the traditional drama directing work like *Z-Cars* and *Softly Softly*". But he was particularly interested in costume drama. He directed a series based on Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*, followed by its sequel *The Pathfinder*. He also directed two Walter Scott serials *Ivanhoe* and *Woodstock*.

Then he moved to *Dr Who* as a director "not because I'm that interested in sci-fi or space but simply because it was a much more imaginative programme to work on. There was a chance to experiment with pictures and ideas". He worked with Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker. Over the years, he directed more *Dr Who* episodes than

anyone except Douglas Camfield. Maloney says, "*Dr Who* was like making as much as you could while you could until somebody blew a whistle. Then you stopped and made the best programme out of what you'd got."

Blake's 7 was Maloney's first series as producer and *Starburst* talked to him as he was starting recordings for the show's third season.

Starburst: Well, what is a producer?

David Maloney: A producer is what Sydney Newman (former BBC Head of Drama) said he is: a midwife who stands by watching the programme being born. If you're making thirteen programmes in a series, it's impossible for one director to direct that number of consecutive episodes. So you have a team of directors and therefore you need planning for



them, because they fight like cat and dog to get facilities and make their show the best. They need a chairman and they need an awful lot of decisions taken for them about the group, the group attitude and the group policy. It's very interesting to talk to the different directors and to hear their version of what the series is supposed to be about. It does need a guiding hand when there is a group of people who are all working on the same project. I've not directed anything except the 26th episode (the last episode of series 2). My time has been full of coping with this programme.

At the beginning, the BBC seemed to blow hot and cold about Blake. When the first series ended, it wasn't certain if there would be a second.

Well, it's a very expensive programme to put out early in the evening. There are far less expensive programmes which go out in prime time. And I think they possibly found it (pause) difficult being sure whether they could afford such an expensive programme to go out at 7.20 in the evening.

I believe the budget was increased for the second series.

Yes, well we were under-budgeted for the



first series and we had a sufficient budget on the second series and we've got more or less that same budget this time. As we're a low-budget show anyway, I don't really feel that our budget can be improved now unless we get ten times the money we've got — and the time, because time is money. We make one every ten days, after all, and that really ... (laughs) ... is the crux of the matter. It makes it a

very fast show.

I heard Programme Planning Department thought of it as cops and robbers in outer space.

Yes. Terry Nation and I discussed the image of the programme, what we could do and what we could advertise that we're doing. And we decided it could only be a "space adventure" — we couldn't really call ourselves in any sense



Top: Avon (Paul Darrow) checks over an awesome array of weapons. Left: The two new additions to the crew of the Liberator, Dayna (Josette Simon) and Tarrant (Steve Pacey). Above: The Tharn (Marcus Powell).

Opposite: Jacqueline Pearce as the evil Servalan, who plans to capture the Liberator for herself.



Terry Nation wrote in the new computer Orac at the end of the first series. (The ship's computer Zen was already established.) And once it had boasted to them that it could get more or less any information that they wanted, we decided it was too dangerous because it would always predict the unknown and they wouldn't go into (any dangerous situation) and then there would be no adventures. So we built into Orac a character fault, an irascibility, so that it wasn't always available — it had whims — it was busy collecting information from other places and was not available, took time. Therefore it wasn't as infallible as it first appeared to be. Useful but not always reliable.

One brave thing you've done is kill off

central characters.

Yes, we killed off a character played by David Jackson (Gan) after 17 episodes — in the middle of the second series. And there was an outcry about that because people like him — children liked him — he had a sort of innocence that communicated to children.

And you killed off the central villain Travis.

Yes, we killed him off at the end of the second series. That's the one I directed — I put him down a sort of a well. (laughs) *Surely it's dangerous to kill off a hero and a central villain. You risk losing audience involvement.*

I don't think so. We have kept one of the villains (Servalan). But the danger of having a permanent, resident "house

villain" is that you're going to get the same situations repeating themselves. If the villain isn't going to win, we're going to get too "formula" — the villains are always springing a trap and the heroes are always escaping and the villains are always being left with egg on their faces. We had this problem at the beginning of the second series and so we deliberately wrote an episode (Weapon) where the villains won. They didn't actually capture the heroes or the ship, but they won the game just to make them respectable again, just because they were losing too often.

Is that why Gan was killed off?

No, Gan was killed off in an arbitrary way.

David Jackson just wanted to leave?



Above: Michael Keating as Vila. Below: Two Dickensian characters who turn up in the new series of Blake's 7.



Top: Steven Pacey, who plays Tarrant, and Josette Simon, who plays Dayna, relax on the set of the new Blake's 7 series.

Above: The Starship Liberator



No, he didn't want to leave. It was something of a whim, I think. We wanted to shock at that point in the series, because everything had seemed so regular and we'd kept the same group on the spaceship. I think the point was to jerk the audience.

I was surprised when Travis was killed off, because you'd already changed the actor.

Yes, we'd changed the actor after the first series. Stephen Greif, who played Travis in the first series was making a (tv) film, which he wanted to do very badly and he couldn't re-join us. He very much wanted to do that and it clashed, so we decided to re-cast the part and bring the same character back.

Why did you decide to re-cast rather than kill him off or ignore him?

Well, Terry Nation, the creator, rather felt that he wanted to make more mileage out of the character and so we re-cast him.

Was this a good idea?

In retrospect?

Well, you were looking dubious.

(Pause) I'm not sure. The reason that we decided to keep the character was that, so far, he had been very successful. We had a slightly comic-strip gimmick-villain who had only one eye and a raygun (imbedded) in his left hand. And we decided by a process of analysis that, if we killed him off, we'd only be looking to create the same kind of villain again. So, in that he'd been successful, perhaps it was best to leave it alone.

How have you tried to make series 3 different from the previous two?

Well, the series will be different because it will have more one-off disconnected adventures. With the power of the Federation destroyed, as it is at the beginning of the third series, and the federated worlds having disintegrated, the Federation having lost control, there is more chaos and confusion and, although we have Servalan still wanting to acquire the Liberator, we have a chance for more single stories. We still have mainline series stories, but we're not so heavily formatted in terms of the Federation. We've got one real fantasy episode written by the science fiction novelist Tanith Lee.

Are you having more unconnected stories so that American stations can run the series out of sequence like Dr Who?

No. Some of the series can be run out of sequence, but some of it has a serial connection. I think that's one of the big differences between British and American series. The Americans tend to want a constant style throughout. In fact, they fire their directors as soon as the shooting is over and the editing is done by the producer. They tend to want the episodes to be interchangeable, whereas British actors like to work on a line of character development so that it's difficult to put one episode away from another one

because they're actually developing their characters and very much building on what's happened to their character in the history of the series.

The same presumably goes for the series producer.

We're constantly seeking to get the style right for the series. What I decided at the



The two newest members of Blake's 7 explore the surface of an alien planet.

beginning of the first series was that anything which didn't work in terms of story or visuals we should change. We shouldn't bother too much about continuity. If it didn't work, we'd throw it out and get something else. So there would be subtle changes until we got things that we thought were working.

I didn't notice any changes during the first series. Were there any?

In subtle ways. Details. Guns and all sorts of things.

One thing that did strike me about the style is that they dress like Robin Hood and his merry men.

Yes, that was the costume designer at the time. It wasn't deliberate. We actually had that image in mind, but it wasn't meant to be transmitted. We just used Robin Hood sometimes as a springboard for ideas.

Idea?

Well, we went back over what happened to Robin Hood. We actually based an episode on Blake being captured by the equivalent of the Sheriff of Nottingham and then being freed and escaping.

Can too much action detract from characterisation?

Well, action usually means film and, as we generally have the same amount of film

content, you get the same amount of action.

Have you thought of altering the percentage of film on the new series?

No, it's an economic fact and it's very difficult. We have four ways of making pictures. One is with a film camera on exterior location. One is going onto a stage at (the BBC Television Film Studios in) Ealing and making interiors. Then there's the video studio work. And finally there's model filming work. In the time that we have, we can't ever take a full 50 minutes into the studio: there just isn't time. We have to take 20% off and prepare it (on film) before we go there.

So scheduling is still one of your main problems?

Situations aren't usually as complex as they were when we started Blake's 7. We started with, as it turned out, not quite a big enough budget and we started off on a tighter schedule. In our ten days, we were not only rehearsing the actors and taking them into the studio, but also filming for three days for future episodes. That process is known as strike filming. It meant a much heavier drain on the actors' energy and also much more complex scheduling in terms of how we got actors out of rehearsal to send them away to some other place to film, bring them back again having missed days of rehearsal and then take them into the studio. It was very, very exhausting for the actors.

And what's the reaction been? Totally enthusiastic?

Oh no — it's a very controversial programme. Half the people one knows really hate it.

It has been a success, though. Do you think it would have been so successful if Star Wars hadn't whetted people's appetites?

Well, I wonder how many people have actually seen Star Wars in this country. We have had audiences of over ten million watching one episode of Blake's 7. How many people have seen Star Wars, I wonder. It would be interesting to know. I wonder if Blake's 7 might be whetting the appetite for Star Wars and that type of film.

If there's a fourth series of Blake's 7, will you still be producing it?

I can probably say I'm moving on now to other projects. So there would probably be a new person on it.

What are you moving on to?

Day of the Triffids ●

And on that cryptic note we leave David Maloney. We at Starburst could hardly contain our curiosity at the final remark of the interview and managed to extract a promise from Mr Maloney to tell us more about his next project as soon as the plans become final. Watch for further developments.

STARBURST —LETTERS—

I am writing to you in the hope that you can supply me with the answers to a few questions which I think may be of interest to your readers.

Every time I see an episode guide for Star Trek, three of the listed episodes always puzzle me, because I don't believe they have ever been shown on television in this country. The episodes I refer to are: *The Empath, Whom Gods Destroy* and *Plato's Stepchildren*. Although most Star Trek episodes have now been aired at least three times to my knowledge, I do not recall having seen these particular episodes. Were the titles changed for some reason? Or did the BBC ban these episodes altogether?

If I am correct about the scarcity of these episodes in Britain, could the BBC not be persuaded to show them now?

Congratulations on a superior sf magazine, much better value for money than any other similar magazines on the market.

Paul Deegan, Huyton, Liverpool.

After exhaustive research (we consulted our resident tv expert Tise Vahimig) we managed to track down some information on the Star Trek episodes to which you refer, Paul. *Plato's Stepchildren* (Season 3) was indeed banned in this country. This segment was long on sadism and contained television's first interracial kiss. Presumably the BBC felt that the sadism content was not the sort of thing they wanted screened in Britain, and remember that in 1969, when this episode was made, race was a far more sensitive area than it is now.

Whom Gods Destroy (Season 3) concerned the murderous leader of an insane asylum who instigates a revolt to seize the Enterprise and with the help of his lunatic comrades conquer the Universe. It is difficult to see what the BBC could have objected to in that segment. Perhaps they felt that lunacy was a delicate area too.

The Empath has been screened in this country. Associate Editor Alan McKenzie distinctly remembers seeing it during the

show's first run at the BBC. However, it is thought that the episode has not been repeated since.

As to whether the missing episodes will ever be screened in Britain, it is likely that the BBC ordered Star Trek by the season, barring the shows they were hesitant to screen. Perhaps Star Trek The Motion Picture will generate enough viewer interest to persuade the BBC to seek out the missing episodes and purchase them.

I would like to point out a couple of errors in John Fleming's feature, *The Lost Worlds*, in Starburst 12.

Willis O'Brien teamed up with producer Herbert M. Dawley to make a film called *Ghost of Slumber Mountain* in 1917.

Following completion of the six reel feature, Dawley decided to take full credit for the film's creation, even going so far to take out various patents on full size armatures of the monsters in the film, and saying in interviews at the time that he had created the effects for the film.

O'Brien naturally objected and the release of *Ghost of Slumber Mountain* was delayed till 1919, at which point Dawley cut The Ghost in half, releasing the second part as *Along the Moonbeam Trail*. It is common knowledge that Dawley did nothing else than provide the financial backing for O'Brien's animation work, though all the posters for The Ghost only mention Dawley's name. The Ghost was a huge success and despite its short running time had a massive advertising campaign. It grossed 100,000 dollars in its opening week in New York.

As for the Irwin Allen 1960 version, O'Brien was contracted to make stop motion animation models for that film, however Allen decided costs would not allow it and used instead photographically enlarged lizards, which were obviously put through considerable pain in the making of the film.

It should also be noted that not all the models from the 1925

Lost World are lost. Remnants are held by Forrest J. Ackerman in his museum of the fantastic in Los Angeles.

It is a shame that John did not seek out Bessie Love who lives in London, and has, I'm sure, many interesting stories to tell about her experiences on making the '25 classic.

Phil Edwards, London W14.

I am very impressed with the presentation and concept of your magazine. You have the right balance of pictures and articles without wasting valuable space.

On reading John Brosnan's feature on Irwin Allen (Starburst 13) I found him to be a little too critical of a man who seems to have produced a number of successful television series and films.

A good idea for the future would be to review the work of Chris Foss, the great science fiction artist, with possibly a portfolio of his best pieces.

While I disagree with Matthew Waterhouse's comments (Letters, Starburst 13) that American television science fiction is comparable to junk food when Britain is responsible for low-budget soap-operas in space like *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* I agree that most of our science fiction is aimed at a more intellectual audience.

Looking at Robert Mager's letter on your look at American magazines in Starburst 8, I think that while Omni is a very informative magazine, it is obviously intended for affluent coffee tables.

Please excuse my ignorance, but when was the independent publisher, Starburst Magazines, taken over by Marvel Comics Group?

Here's to the future!
David Simnett, London SE4.

The first issue of Starburst published by Marvel Comics, David, was Starburst 4, which coincidentally cover featured *The Incredible Hulk*.

I really enjoyed reading issue 14 of Starburst and there was not

one part of the magazine I disliked. For a start, the changes in the cover design gave it a more mature look than previous issues. The only thing that spoiled the cover, in my opinion, was the blurb in the bottom left corner proclaiming Starburst to be 'Britain's No 1 Science Fantasy Media Magazine — I know it is!'

The Allen review by John Brosnan was excellent and I most especially agreed with what he said in the last paragraph about the inevitability of a flood of Alien ripoffs. I hope Starburst warns us of the real stinkers before we make the mistake of paying money to see them.

The Avengers article wasn't too bad either and like the first instalment in issue 13, I quite enjoyed part 2.

The interview with Tony Harding was also good, especially since I enjoy the BBC science fantasy shows and have been a fan of Doctor Who for some time. Most people, as Tony Harding said, tend to point out how bad the bad points are, while they seem to overlook the good. For instance, there is the excellent portrayal of the Doctor by Tom Baker which is, to say the least, different.

The feature on the French film, *Gandahar* vs the Metal Warriors was visually interesting and informative, and as usual *Things to Come* covered just about all the news concerning sf on tv and in the cinema.

After the letters page, which contained some interesting letters came the article on the old science fiction serials. This by far and away the best article I have read for a long time. It's this type of feature which makes me enjoy reading Starburst so much and makes me look forward to each new issue.

Ian D. Churchward, Torquay.

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ALIEN PORTFOLIO



Above: *Terror in space!* Or more precisely *It, The Terror from Beyond Space* (1958). The movie (from which *Alien* lifted liberally) featured Ray "Crash" Corrigan in a snarling rubber suit. The crew of the invaded ship finally suited up and pulled the plug on the oxygen supply, making short work of poor old Crash. Right: Rock star David Bowie as he appeared in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. (1975).



Above: The Monolith Monsters are crystalline meteors which, when wet, absorb the silicon from living creatures, turning them to stone. A cloudburst causes the alien rocks to advance towards a town, increasing in size as they go. Finally their progress is halted by salt. Jack Arnold and director John Sherwood pleaded guilty as charged (1957).



Way back in Starburst 10, we presented a feature on Aliens of the movies. This month we decided to assemble a special pictorial feature from the pictures that were squeezed out first time around due to lack of space. Captions by Alan Murdoch.



Above: *The Green Slime* (1968) was an American/Japanese co-production in which grotesque alien lumps invaded a space station and began to multiply at a furious rate. The movie is a strong contender for the Worst SF Film of All Time award. Below left: In the 1967 Roger Vadim movie *Barbarella*, Jane Fonda (in the title role) met an alien angel played by John Philip Law.



Top right: The two monsters pictured appear in Japan's *War of the Monsters* (1977). Summoned from "Space M" by two intelligent cockroaches (!) the creatures are defeated by Godzilla and Anguirus. Above right: The alien from Jack Arnold's *The Space Children* resembles a giant brain. Its mission on Earth: to prevent the launching of an atomic missile by the American Authorities.

ALIEN PORTFOLIO

Right: In *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958), aliens landed on Earth and assumed human form so they could breed with Earth women to save their dying planet. Gloria Talbot was the bride of the title and Tom Tryon was the lucky bridegroom. His monster outfit (pictured here) was designed and built by Charles Gemora, who had designed, built and operated the Martian, "Louis Lump-Lump", who appeared in George Pal's *War of the Worlds* (1953).





Left: *The Queen of Outer Space* (1958) featured Zsa Zsa Gabor and concerned the ruler of Venus, a despotic, hideously scarred matriarch who wants to conquer Earth.



Above: *The lovely Dr Ruth Adams* (played by the equally lovely Feith Domergue) and the grotesque Metaluna Mutant (that's stuntman Eddie Parker under Bud Westmore's makeup) attempt the Military Twostep in this posed publicity still. *This Island Earth* (1955).

Centre left: *Margaret Field* meets *The Man from Planet X* (1950). Bottom left: *A hapless astronaut confronts a one-eyed brain* during his *Journey to the Seventh Planet* (1961).

ALIEN PORTFOLIO



Top left: Photocall on the set of *This Island Earth* (1955) again. Faith Domergue poses with a group of Metaluna's more handsome inhabitants. Top right: The title stars of *Day of the Triffids* (1963) were ten foot tall walking plants with a taste for human flesh. Here a triffid takes Janette Scott for the chef's Plat du Jour. Above: The hero of *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), Richard Carlson, comes face to face with two of the "It's", who have the power to assume human shape. The giveaway is that their eyes have a healthy glint to them.

AUTHENTIC "NOSTROMO" CAP
from the 20th Century Fox film
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SEACON THE WORLD SCIENCE FI

FEATURE BY BENNY ALDRICH

Every four years the Annual World Science Fiction Convention moves its location outside the United States for the benefit of SF fans around the world. The current favourite for the 1983 World Con being Australia.

But this last year, 1979, saw the event take on the name Seacon as its base moved to sunny Brighton on the South East coast of England. Much to the bewilderment of local citizens and sunseekers alike, over 3000 SF fans (of all shapes, sizes and nationalities) gathered at the

Metropole for five days of film and drinks, lectures and drinks, panels and drinks, book trading and drinks, plus the odd opportunity for quick refreshment.

... In the world of science fiction fans, the British contingent has a proud record as upstanding (oft downward-tumbling) drinkers, and it's highly likely a far greater profit was made by the hotel bar than all of the book dealers put together.

But, between these bouts, a highly commendable variety of events took place — making Seacon one of the best conventions held in Britain over the last ten years.

Guests of honour were top American fantasy novelist Fritz Leiber (best known for his Fafhrd and Gray Mouser series) and Great Brit Brian Aldiss. But present also were many of the top talents of science fiction today, including (other than those pictured right) Harry Harrison, Alfred Bester, David Kyle, Anne McCaffrey and. Bob Shaw.

Movies were well represented also, with feature films including the original BBC-tv *Quatermass and the Pit*, *Superman* (1978), *Star Wars*, *Eraserhead*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and over 30 others, under the direction of Leroy Kettle and *Starburst*-er John Brosnan.

John Baxter chaired a special effects talk with Derek Meddings (*Superman*, James Bond) talking about movies, and Mat Irvine (*Doctor Who*, *Blake's 7*) talking about TV.

Both Nigel Kneale (*Quatermass, Beasts*) and Val Guest (veteran Hammer director) gave talks, as did producer Gary Kurtz — on *The Empire Strikes Back*. Arthur C. Clarke discussed his involvement in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and Dez Skinn tried to avoid promoting *Doctor Who Weekly* too often while interviewing Tom Baker.

A film-writers' panel included John Baxter, John Brosnan, Philip Strick, Forry Ackerman. Christopher Reeve was also on hand, though he looked somewhat startled to be met at the main convention entrance by two Stormtroopers. Names familiar to comic book fantasy lovers were also in attendance, including *X-Men* award-winning author Chris Claremont, DC editor/writer Paul Levitz and artist Joe Staton.

For those of you who missed it, here are a few photos of some of the celebrities present ...



CTION CONVENTION: BRIGHTON 1979



Facing page: Frederik Pohl (top), Jerry Pournelle (middle) and Theodore Sturgeon. Above: Panelists John Brunner and Joe Haldeman (top), Brian Aldiss (either mid-pun or mid-probability) and Fritz Leiber.

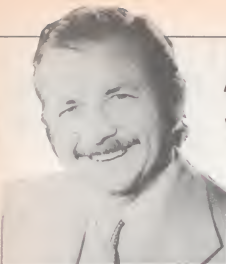


Above: Chris Reeve, without the kiss curl which helped make him an instant super-star, drew one of the larger queues imaginable when he agreed to a signing session. Below: Larry Niven, looking bleary eyed following his signing session!



A BOY AND

Still unseen in this country nearly five years after it was made, the film version of Harlan Ellison's short story, *A Boy and his Dog*, turned up a short while back in one of London's cinema clubs. We present this review by John Fleming who was at the screening.



A man is crawling along the dirt in rags. He is carrying a rifle. Faint screams can be heard in the background. A voice is talking on the soundtrack about what happened in World War III. The voice belongs to a dog.

This is a love story about the man crawling along in the dirt and his shaggy, telepathic sheepdog. The dog's name is Blood. The man's name is Vic, but the dog calls him Albert. *A Boy and His Dog* is the brilliant 1975 film of Harlan Ellison's novella. So far, it has no British distributor.

Harlan Ellison's novella won the prestigious Nebula Award. The film was made by an obscure company, LQJaf, co-owned by supporting actors L.Q. Jones and Alvy Moore. Jones scripted and the film was just about to start shooting with a respected and experienced director. Then, one day, he took Jones aside and said, "I have an overpowering sense of doom". He was taken off the picture and Jones became director.

Across the desert comes a local cut-throat and his gang. He's called Fellini. He rides a machine made from bed-springs, a toilet bowl, washer and dryer fronts etc. He is dressed in tatters, his face grimy, his manner brutal and sadistic, stomping on his cronies' spines.

"Wonder why they hang around him," says Vic.

"Probably charisma," mutters Blood telepathically.

Vic and Blood steal a sack of tinned food from Fellini and barter their way into a blue movie show in a ramshackle tent town. As Vic watches the scratched and mutilated images, Blood becomes bored: "How can you enjoy a show without popcorn?" he asks incredulously.

The dog is the star of the film. He was taught to take directions from his human co-star and so does not, like most movie dogs, look off-screen for commands from his trainer. Dog and boy are interdependent. The boy finds food for the dog; the dog smells out women for the boy.

They find one girl, Quilla June Holmes, hiding underground but, before



HIS DOG



Vic can approach her, a pack of men arrives. Blood mutters an aside: "Let the seven dwarfs have Snow White and we can get out of here with all our parts." But, instead, they beat off the attackers in a bloody battle.

The next day, Quilla June lures Vic to an underground world called Topeka. Harlan Ellison admits: "The down-under section is much weaker than the above-ground stuff. It's my fault because I didn't really create a down-under section that was realistic. I wanted to poke fun at the middle class. It became a vehicle for

my fury at the common man during that whole period of repression — of Agnew and Mitchell and Nixon."

It's also clear that one basic mistake is Vic leaves Blood, the film's central character, above-ground during this section of the story. In the under-world, Vic is captured by the ruling Committee (one of whom, Dr Moore, is played by co-producer Alvy Moore). He escapes, but not before he meets a smiling robot with hands which can screw and scrunch necks so that blood surges out of the victims' mouths. Up on the surface, Vic is

re-united with Blood and the film has an astonishing final twist.

Harlan Ellison is uneasy about it: "The last line is really, I think, just a cheap shot. But audiences love it and I can't fight that."

L.Q. Jones says: "The last line of the picture took me three months to write. A lot of people don't like it, but a lot of people do. To me, that line says what the whole picture is about and what the philosophy of their lives is."

Because of the eccentricities of British film distribution, you cannot see *A Boy and His Dog* in this country. But, if it ever does get shown, see it. Despite a misjudged underworld section, it is well-made, extremely funny and has one of the great final lines of all-time. When I saw the film, there was silence for two or three seconds after the line, then scattered guffaws and applause from the audience.

A Boy and his Dog (1975)

Don Johnson (as Vic), Tiger (Blood), Tim McIntyre (Blood's Voice), Susanne Benton (Quilla June), Charles McGraw (The Preacher), Jason Roberts (Mr Law Craddock), Alvy Moore (Dr Moore), Helene Winston (Mez), Hal Baylor (Michael), Ron Feinberg (Fellini), Mike Rupert (Gary), Don Carter (Ken), Michael Hershman (Richard). Written and directed by L.Q. Jones, Music by Tim McIntyre, Photographed by John Arthur Morrill, Edited by Scott Conrad, Production design Ray Boyle, Produced by Alvy Moore.



Top left: Producer Alvy Moore. Above left: Vic (Don Johnson) known as Albert, is a loner. He prowls the countryside with his dog, Blood, in search of food. Left: Vic and Blood find themselves looking down the business end of a double barrelled shotgun. Top: Dilemma. Vic must choose between his dog and the strange girl he meets, Quilla June (Susanne Benton). Above: Vic is understandably suspicious when he stumbles across Quilla June alone and unprotected in a derelict gymnasium.

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PROJECT UFO

Fans of the small-screen, from that generation who remember Jack Webb's police actioner *Dragnet* ("All we want are the facts, ma'am"), will also recall Webb's innovative production style — notable for its terse dialogue, rapid-fire editing and its stoney-faced, emotionless featured characters.

Although Webb's Mark VII Productions appear to be a most prolific tv film making outfit these days, one of his more recent offerings, *Project UFO*, leaves a lot to be desired. Obviously inspired by Steven Spielberg's 1978 box-office grosser, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Mark VII's unidentified flying object series arrives on the home screen as little more than the old *Dragnet* format given a pseudo sf re-spray.

The whole nature of the show is strict, formal and documentary-like. As a stern voice narrates, the opening sequence shows us a series of blueprints crossing the screen: "Izikiel saw the wheel. This is the wheel he said he saw. These are unidentified flying objects that people say they are seeing now. Are they proof that we are being visited by civilisations from other stars... or just what are they? The United States Air Force began an investigation of this high strangeness in a search for the truth. What you are about to see is part of that 20-year search."

Concluding in 1969, the US Air Force's Project Blue Book investigated UFO reports and sightings for over 22 years, and it is from these files that the series' episodes are based.

Creator-executive producer Jack Webb "liberated" files of the actual cases from the Air Force under the Freedom of Information Act, and accumulated over 400,000 documents (on microfilm) which detailed some 13,000 sightings.

"Roughly 70 per cent of the Air Force's cases were explained satisfactorily as natural phenomena like balloons or clouds," comments Webb. "There were hoaxes, too, like people sailing hubcaps in the air and photographing them. But about 12 to 15 per cent are true unknowns."

Project UFO's general theme operates around two deadly earnest Air Force officers, Major Jake Gatlin (played by William Jordan) and Sergeant Harry Fitz (Caskey Swaim), who travel around the country interviewing "witnesses" and



HIDDEN AWAY, FOR THE MOST PART, IN AN AFTERNOON "GRAVE-YARD SLOT" PROJECT UFO, A SCIENCE FICTION SERIES FROM DRAGNET'S JACK WEBB, IS BEING SCREENED — APPARENTLY RELUCTANTLY — BY MOST ITV REGIONS. STARBURST PRESENTS A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE SERIES BY TISE VAHIMAGI.

probing for "physical evidence."

The content and style of each episode is confusingly presented. By way of an opening teaser (the idea being to grab the viewer from the start), we get to actually see a UFO, whether it be a misshapen boomerang-like object sailing past a commercial airliner or a luminous glob spewing forth small green men to frighten Kansas corn-belt farmers. That established, we then join our two dauntless military men in search of "hard" evidence and "reliable" witnesses. Sometimes, when the storyline offers several subplots, we get to see several UFO incidents; all are tracked down during the course of the following hour.

However, the problem — a glaring, unmistakable one — is that most of the cases are then logically explained away, proven to be of a natural and earthly origin (from distorted weather balloons to unique compositions of sun and cloud formations). To show a character in the story witness an event at the beginning, then have two other characters prove it to be a common-or-garden item at the conclusion is just plain deceit on behalf of the show's producers. It's not unlike an old Hitchcock play wherein a character's story shown in flashback turns out to be a lie.

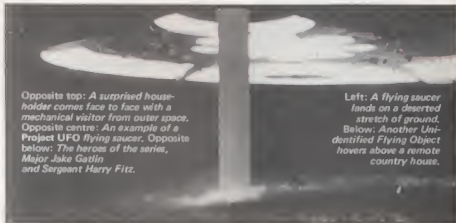
It must leave the viewer wondering if the show is actually on the side of the UFOs, telling us that they *do* really exist.

Sadly, after about two or three episodes, the viewer will be able to tell pretty quickly what the outcome of the investigations will yield; the likely, earth-bound origin of the apparent UFO, which of the witnesses are lying etc.

Another aspect of "high strangeness" arises between the two central Air Force characters. There is no natural camaraderie between them, they simply and formally address each other as "Major" and "Sergeant." Their cold formality toward interviewees — the latter usually taking on the stance of witches at a witch-hunt — stops barely short of a war-crimes trial, but held over a coffee table.

With most of the cases proven to be natural phenomena or hoaxes the show becomes almost a crash-course in frustration — you *want* them to discover a real flying saucer or shake hands with little green men, or *something*!

But, no. What little they *do* give credence to merely results in a neutral



Opposite top: A surprised householder comes face to face with a mechanical visitor from outer space. Opposite centre: An example of a Project UFO flying saucer. Opposite below: The heroes of the series, Major Jake Gatlin and Sergeant Harry Fitz.

Left: A flying saucer lands on a deserted stretch of ground. Below: Another unidentified Flying Object hovers above a remote country house.

report. The whole of West Virginia could be littered with flying saucer debris and screaming little green men but Project Blue Book wouldn't recognise it as "physical evidence." Typical exchange at the close of an episode would be: "And what would the Air Force file this one under, Major?" Casting a knowing glance at the questioner, "Unknown".

The show's special effects are two-pronged: the bad ones appear (via subjective camera) as intricately designed boxes, sometimes pulsating with coloured lights, that move slowly into extreme close-up; the good effects come along when a landing or hovering UFO is seen in composition (and size-reference) with the surrounding countryside. Some of the latter effects can be quite interesting when the UFO is seen moving through trees or cruising just above a highway.

Project UFO's production, in most departments, is handled efficiently, including some good-to-expert location photography. Although regular scripters, Harold Jack Bloom, Donald L. Gold and Robert Blees, sometimes tend to get too bogged down with technical facts and jargon, Blees' *The Nevada Desert Incident* teleplay remains a topnotch job, carefully constructed and dramatically effective. The show's producer, William Coleman, is a retired Air Force colonel who actually ran Project Blue Book during the early '60s. Excepting Richard Quine's direction on the premiere segment (*The Washington D.C. Incident*), the rest of the episodes are merged with routine interest by Robert Leeds, Sig Neufeld and Dennis Donnelly. Music by Nelson Riddle underlines most accurately the theme of events — impending disaster ●



BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Alex Carpenter



THE OFFICIAL ALIEN POSTER MAGAZINE

One of the better aspects of the current boom in science fiction films is the attention that it is attracting from other sectors of the media. It is now almost certain that every (successful) film will encourage someone to produce some kind of "souvenir" of the film.

Fans of *Alien* are especially lucky in that, apart from the traditional tie-in novel (two of them if you count the earlier edition without stills as a separate "collectable") the film has given birth to *The Book of Alien*, *Alien: The Illustrated Story* and *The Alien Movie Novel* (a kind of up-market fotonovel). There are also more peripheral items such as model kits, tee-shirts and caps but, back where we are, now comes... *an Alien poster mag*.

Of all the spin-off publications the poster mag is the one with the most sales potential but it is not often that it is fully realised. Many people are not willing to pay much more than £1 for their books so the market for *The Book of Alien* (£2.50), *Alien: The Illustrated Story* (£2.50) and *The Alien Movie Novel* (£3.95) is more limited than that of the novelisation and other cheaper items such as the poster mag. However, even though people are more willing to part with money for the cheaper items they still expect value for money and a poster mag is very vulnerable to attack for lack of value.

This is not entirely the publishers' fault as there is only a certain amount that can be achieved within the limitations of the format. All poster mags suffer because, out of the sixteen pages available, one is for the cover and four or eight for the poster leaves only seven or eleven pages to achieve any sort of editorial "fitness".

The scene that was finally used in *The Official Alien Poster Mag* is of the space jockey with the space-suited Lambert in the foreground. Fine, it's nice enough but does any-

body want to put a two-tone (grey-white) poster on their wall?

Poster mags are a great idea but only if the film under "examination" has some scenes that will work as posters. Publishers shouldn't produce a poster mag just because they have the rights to a successful film — more thought is needed!

A final thought, does *Alien* have any scenes that would make good posters?

Published by Felden Productions. 16 pages. 45p.

ALIEN MOVIE NOVEL edited by

Richard J. Anobile

Back in the mists of time (Starburst 4 to be accurate) I reviewed the *Close Encounters of the Third Kind Fotonovel*. At that time I said — and still say — that the small paperback style detracts from the overall impact of the format. This book changes all that.

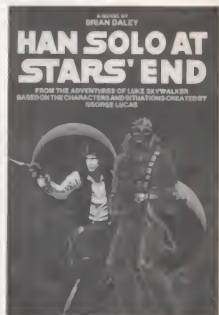
The larger size of the *Alien Movie Novel* together with the use of over three times as many stills as the average fotonovel has enabled the editor to make the story flow more smoothly. Not only that, the additional space makes it easier for changes in the layout to give impact to those points in the tale that need it. One particular part of the plot where this helps to create additional atmosphere is in the infamous "chest-buster" scene.

The basic format of the book is 3 or 4 stills to a page banded to read down the page with occasional smaller photos aiding with scene-setting. As the story unfolds towards the inevitable demise of Kane the pace begins to quicken and Mr Anobile implies this by increasing the number of photos per page.

Although the success of this type of book is relatively new, the format itself isn't and Richard Anobile has had previous experience with it. One of his earlier ventures into this field was with a series titled *The Film Classics Library*. Included in the series were (James Whale's) *Frankenstein* and *Psycho* and, even though the books were well-received they were not a commercial success — possibly because their black and white reproduction was not as visually attractive as the current package. (I appreciate that the films mentioned were not in colour but the point itself remains valid.) Recently Mr Anobile's work in this area has included the *Mork and Mindy Video Novel* and the *Batstar Galactic Photostory*.

Another breakthrough has come with this book — this is the use of the frames the anamorphic print to achieve the blow-ups for reproduction. Up until now, the frames have been from the 35mm print and the new method does seem to produce an increase in the quality of reproduction although this could, of course, be attributed solely to the larger size — I doubt it.

Published by Futura Books; 208 pages; 10 1/2 x 8 1/4"; £3.95.



HAN SOLO AT STARS' END by Brian Daley.

Writing a novel that has a large, guaranteed sales potential must be the dream of every aspiring writer but, like making a pact with the devil, there's a price to be paid for gaining such a prize.

In the case of *Han Solo at Stars' End* the price that Brian Daley paid was not his soul but rather his creativity.

The major fault with this book is that, as the plot progresses, it becomes clearer that nothing is going to happen to either Han or Chewbacca nor is there going to be any major event that could possibly affect the universe being created in front of the cameras. As I write this review the word "sterile" comes to mind and that is exactly what this book is — sterile and pre-packaged.

It's pre-packaged in that the more one reads the more certain becomes the feeling that Mr Daley was told to write a *Star Wars* tale that didn't go anywhere! That he has managed to do so in an entertaining manner is beside the point because, in the final analysis, the story is pointless. There are a number of indicators to the book being crafted to satisfy the countless cries for more stories without disturbing *The Empire Strikes Back* and future additions to the *Star Wars* canon. They include isolating Han and Chewbacca from the mainstream of the *Star Wars* universe whilst ensuring their surroundings are not too alien by introducing two 'droids with an astonishing resemblance — in their speech and actions — to R2D2 and C3PO and by creating yet another all-powerful and malevolent organisation for our heroes to pit themselves against. That the new entity is called the (Corporate Sector) Authority is meaningless — it still needs like the Empire to me!

Published by Sphere Books Ltd. 208 pages. 95p.

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THE FANTASTIC WORLDS OF GEORGE PAL

Since the earliest years of the 1950s, producer/director George Pal, who had made his name in Hollywood with his very successful series of animated "Puppetoons", has represented the pioneering spirit of the modern science fiction film. Tise Vahimagi looks at Pal's career which has spanned nearly thirty years.



George Pal, producer-director-writer-puppeteer, is a name that has spanned three decades of fantasy film-making. To one generation of science-fiction buffs his name means *The War of the Worlds*, to another it means *Doc Savage* — but who is the man behind the name?

George Pal was born on February 1, 1908, in Cegled, a small town near Budapest, Hungary. His family having strong theatrical connections, a sense of wonder and showmanship was already in young George's blood. Although he attended the Budapest Academy of Arts, and acquired some knowledge of anatomy along the way, he didn't enter the film industry until later when he got a job designing the title cards for silent films.

It was during this time, illustrating subtitles for Hunnia Films, that he married Zsoka Grandjean, his childhood sweetheart. With his responsibilities now doubled, Pal decided to move to Berlin and, hopefully, more money. He even-

tually got work at Germany's largest film studio, UFA, and was soon promoted to head of the cartoon department. American cartoons, coming out of Hollywood, were a great influence on Pal and he began experimenting with his own; one year later, in 1932, he left UFA and started up his own studio. This was to lead to the creation of his famous Puppetoons.

However, with the increase of Nazi power in Germany Pal and his wife

Pal produced 41 Puppetoons between 1941 and 1947.

moved on again, travelling around various cities in Europe until they settled in Holland. Here he opened another studio and began producing commercials for Philips Radio, Horlicks Milk and Unilever, as well as the large American advertising concern G. Walter Thompson. Following many unsuccessful attempts for an American visa Mr and Mrs Pal were finally granted entry and moved to New York in 1940.

On arrival in America he was contacted by Paramount, who were impressed with his puppet films, and asked him to produce a series of these shorts for the studio. A delighted George Pal immediately went into production, assisted eventually by a staff of forty-five, and produced 41 Puppetoons for Paramount between 1941 and 1947, six of which were nominated for Academy Awards. In 1943 he received an Academy Award for pioneering new techniques in producing animated pictures. 1947 saw the close of the Puppetoon studio and the last of the puppet films, except for a short sequence seen in Paramount's all-star *Variety Girl* in 1947.

After producing several educational shorts for the Shell Oil Company, Pal became determined to produce feature films. At this time he had three projects prepared, ready for financing: *tom thumb*, *Operation Moon* and *Rupert*. None of the studios were interested in *tom thumb* or *Operation Moon*, but Pal managed to get his *Rupert* project fin-



Far left: The horrific effects of a punctured space suit from *Conquest of Space* (1955). Centre left: Lee Vasque, head of the Paramount prop shop, works on one of the war machine miniatures from *War of the Worlds* (1953). Left: A scene from *War of the Worlds*. Notice the wires suspending the machines. Above: A tense moment from *Conquest of Space*. Below: Charlton Heston has ants in his pants in *The Naked Jungle* (1953).



anced and, in 1949, Eagle-Lion Films released *The Great Rupert*. Produced by Pal and directed by Irving Pichel, *The Great Rupert* was a musical comedy revolving around a charming little squirrel; although most people believed it to be a real squirrel (trained to perform) it was in fact an animated model. Unfortunately, *The Great Rupert* was no box-office smash but it was warmly received by the critics, and George Pal was on his way to feature film production.

PIONEERING SCIENCE FICTION

1950 to 1953 would be good years for George Pal — for they were the great science fiction years. First off was *Operation Moon*, the other half of *The Great Rupert* two picture deal. Science fiction author Robert Heinlein and screen-scribe "Rip" Von Ronkel co-wrote a script (based on Heinlein's novel *Rocketship Galileo*) which was called *Journey to the Moon*. This, with Pal's contribution,

became *Operation Moon* and was eventually released, in August, 1950, as *Destination Moon*.

Though appearing unsophisticated by today's standards, the film's story, about a flight to the moon, was received by audiences of the day as breath-taking adventure, especially as it was filmed in Technicolor. Under the direction of Irving Pichel again, *Destination Moon* was a simple journey-to-the-moon-and-back fantasy, though presented in semi-documentary fashion. Despite the cast of unknowns, the behind-the-scenes crew consisted of some of the most accomplished in their field: cinematographer Lionel Lindon, production designer Ernst Fegte, special effects technician Lee Zavitz, and Chesley Bonestell as technical adviser and astronomical artist. Pal came up with a clever idea to familiarise audiences with the workings of a rocket-ship; he hired *Woody Woodpecker* creator Walter Lantz to make a short cartoon which explained the basic technology in an elementary fashion. Pal and Lantz

were close friends and Pal occasionally offers a tribute to his old buddy in his features, such as *The Time Machine*, *The Power and Doc Savage*, through the appearance of a Woody Woodpecker doll or toy.

Sadly, today, there is little to excite or enthrall viewers of *Destination Moon* — particularly since Neil Armstrong's little dance routine in July, 1969. However, *When Worlds Collide* took George Pal in a whole new direction. The project had been gathering dust since 1934 when

When Worlds Collide was to be a Cecil B. DeMille film.

Paramount had promoted it as an upcoming Cecil B. DeMille production. Pal acquired the rights to film the story and, in 1951, audiences were treated to a spectacular tidal wave hitting New York City and the collision between Earth and a large, runaway planet, Bellus.

Filmed in lush Technicolor with some excellent process photography by Faricot Edouard, *When Worlds Collide* builds up

Right: *The Space Ark* stands on the runway before its epic voyage to the planet Zyra in the film *When Worlds Collide* (1951). Below left: The space ship from *Destination Moon* (1950).

and up to an all-too-disappointing climax. Everyone knows of and expects the destruction of the planets in the final scenes, but when it comes it's over too quickly to be of any real impact (if you'll pardon the use of the word).

Nevertheless, the sequence showing a tremendous tidal wave ripping its way through New York is devastating and exciting; quite justly the film won the Academy Award for special effects. However, Pal's most famous special effects bonanza came two years later, in the shape of *The War of the Worlds*.

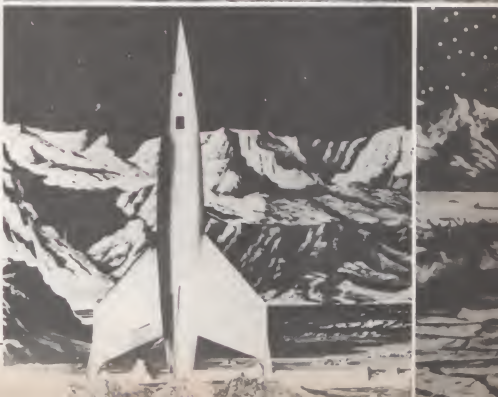
Following *When Worlds Collide* Pal considered a possible sequel, which would also be based on a Philip Wylie-Edwin Balmer novel (*After Worlds Collide*). Pal got Paramount to pick up the rights of the novel but studio interest later faded and the project went into the vaults. Another idea that Pal became intrigued with at the time was the filming of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

War of the Worlds was planned as a 3D movie.

This, too, hit the skids, until of course Disney filmed it.

As with *When Worlds Collide*, Paramount had originally secured the rights to H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* for Cecil B. DeMille (this one back in 1925). Needless to say, DeMille passed over this potential fantasy epic in favour of pursuing his colossal, historical romances. Obviously, for big Cecil, Volga boatmen and Cleopatra's milk baths were far more important than the clashing of planets or invading Martians!

However, Pal revived the *War of the Worlds* project and created one of sf moviedom's greatest visual spectacles. It was also the first of four colourful Pal films to be directed by Byron Haskin. Much has been said of Pal's *War of the Worlds* (maybe too much by now for it not to be viewed as simply a gallery of special effects) but an interesting side-note is that when production initially began Pal was considering filming the last part in the then-popular 3-D process. Too bad nothing ever came of it. Nevertheless, with *War of the Worlds*, Pal "took special effects from mere star status and made them into a super star", and copped the 1953 Academy Award for them.



CONQUEST OF SPACE AND BEYOND

The years between 1953 and 1960 were pretty bare of the visual wonders and overall thrills that the audiences had come to associate with producer George Pal.

Houdini, a starring vehicle for the fresh-faced Tony Curtis, is obviously not in the George Pal realm of adventure filmmaking. It comes across as too much of a personal project (Pal is a big fan of stage magicians and magic acts; he was made a member of the exclusive Magic Circle some years later). A somewhat Hollywoodized version of the Harry Houdini biography, some of the performances involving complex escapology are quite interesting — particularly the final "Torture Cell" trick sequence which kills off the Tony Curtis character.

Next came what is probably Pal's best film of this period — *The Naked Jungle*. Based on a short story by Carl Stephenson called *Leiningen Vs. The Ants*, directed by Haskin, and with effects handled by veteran John P. Fulton, *The Naked Jungle* is a highly dramatic adventure film when it isn't bogged down in the quagmire of contrived romance between Charlton Heston and Eleanor Parker. Paramount advertising hailed the film as "The Picture About the *Marabunta*!" The "*Marabunta*" are an army of soldier ants some two miles wide and twenty miles long who are munching and marching their way through South America towards Heston's plantation. The climactic battle with the horde of ants is clearly the major part of the film, and remains in the memory long after the film is over.

George Pal's 1955 space fantasy, *The*

Below right: The first human beings to set foot on the moon! *Destination Moon* was loosely based on Heinlein's *Rocket Ship Galileo*.

Conquest of Space, is regarded by many as one of his best sf efforts. A review of the film today would make one wonder why. From a story-telling point of view the film is simply dull: a flight to Mars, launched from an orbiting space wheel, is nearly destroyed by a religious fanatic but all is well at the final fade-out. Followers of director Byron Haskin may care to offer thematic parallels with his other films (the heavy-handed religious motif, for example), but is that really important in a science-fiction film? With *Conquest of Space* it is, however, possible to ignore the elementary storyline and concentrate instead on the wonderful colour visuals created by John P. Fulton, Irmin Roberts, Paul Lerpae, Ivyl Burks and Jan Domela; the technical assistance offered by Werner von Braun; the beautiful space art designed by Chesley Bonestell. It is the visual effects that are the important and entertaining factors in *Conquest of Space*. Had the film been made the way Pal originally conceived it, a space trilogy of epic proportions called *Trio of Space*, the film as a whole may have become something more substantial.

Although Paramount was losing interest, and faith, in science fiction films they did try to promote a *Conquest of Space* tv series some three years later.

Pal's old tom thumb idea blossomed in 1957 when MGM took an interest in his project; at first the film was set for song-and-dance man Donald O'Connor to play the title character but when Metro fully came into the picture they insisted on Russ Tamblyn for the role. Pal conceded and then brought the production to Metro's studios in England, where most of tom thumb was shot. For many of the fantastic visuals the effects ranged from massive to miniature; gigantic sets were constructed for some of Tamblyn's dance routines, while animated special effects were created by the newly formed Project Unlimited team of Wah Chang, Gene Warren and Tim Bar (Wah Chang's model work for the "Yawning Man" sequence is nothing short of superb). The film tom thumb became a success for MGM (it won the Academy Award for effects) and the studio contracted Pal for further productions. This led to *The Time Machine* and a whole new creative boost for George Pal.



THE RENAISSANCE OF FANTASY

The Time Machine (the H.G. Wells version) is a somewhat vague story narrated by a largely mysterious traveller known only as George, and ends on a note as cheerful as the Titanic arrival-lounge. Pal, with writer David Duncan, reshuffled a few elements and resulted with a truly splendid example of effects-and-action film making. The Project Unlimited crew were involved in the photographic effects department again, and brought in another special effects Oscar.

Rod Taylor plays the time traveller who journeys from the turn of the century — with stops in 1917, 1940 and

The Time Machine won Pal's fifth Academy Award.

1966 — to the year 802,701. Here he gets himself involved with a childlike race called the Eloi and a cannibalistic horde, the Morlocks. The latter part of the film has its share of exciting moments but the actual time travel sequences come across as the most pleasing and imaginative.

The Time Machine brought in the fifth special effects Academy Award for a George Pal production.

Atlantis, The Lost Continent, produced in 1960 (released in '61), is a sad affair for George Pal. One can easily see what Pal was aiming at in this cross-pollination of Greek mythology, destruction of Pompeii, Jules Verne, and Wells' *Island of Dr Moreau*. Set in ancient Greece, the story tells of a young Greek fisherman who helps a mysterious girl search for the continent of Atlantis.

Sailing boldly where no man has sailed before, the two are picked up by an Atlantean submarine and taken to the "lost continent." From here on in the plot involves the usual court intrigue alongside a surgery for turning men into animals, the construction of a death-ray, the build-up to taking over the world, and the eventual destruction of Atlantis.

The idea had been with Pal since his days with Paramount but the studio executives at the time weren't interested in the Atlantis project. Now with MGM, and the success of *The Time Machine*, Pal unearthed the idea once more and finally managed to get the machinery rolling. While still working on the script, with Daniel Mainwaring, Pal was pressured by Metro to begin production; the studio was desperate at the time, due to a writer's strike, to have something in production. The result was a sorry mish-mash of underdeveloped scenes and, in some cases, stock footage (from *Quo Vadis*). Some scenes, involving bat-winged flying men, were even cut from the final print.

George Pal's following production, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, came in at a time when the three-camera, superwide-screen process of Cinemascope was in style. A joint production between MGM and Cinemascope, Brothers Grimm harked back to the fairy tale world of the Puppets, but on a more spectacular level. The story of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, writers of children's fairy tales, the film is an episodic adventure sharing the writers' biography with their actual stories; Henry Levin directed the biographical scenes and Pal himself directed the fairy stories. While Brothers Grimm contains some marvellous special effects (particularly Jim Danforth's

jewelled dragon sequence) the overall production remains a disappointing exercise.

Despite his two "average" films since *Time Machine*, Pal's creative adrenalin was coursing through again when he went to work on *The Circus of Dr Lao* (from Charles G. Finney's 1935 novel). This time screenwriter Charles Beaumont fashioned a perfect George Pal fantasy script from Finney's story, concerning a strange circus run by an old Chinese man which turns up one day in a small Arizona town. The film, retitled *7 Faces of Dr Lao*, hit the screens in April, 1964. Peter Sellers was Pal's first choice for the part of Dr Lao but it was American actor Tony Randall who finally got the part; Randall, who turned in a magnificent performance in all six roles (Pal's son,

The Power was a science fiction mystery story.

Peter, played the Abominable Snowman), had for many years played second-banana to the leading man in sophisticated comedies.

The film contains a sequence where two men are terrorised by the Loch Ness monster, which grows to gigantic proportions and then shrinks back down the size of a fish. This impressive sequence was animated by Jim Danforth and took over three months to complete. Danforth was nominated for a visual effects Academy Award but was beaten at the post by Disney's Mary Poppins.

Back with Byron Haskin in the director's chair, Pal's next venture was a science fiction mystery (with elements more fitting to an Alfred Hitchcock form of drama) based on a novel by Frank M. Robinson, *The Power*. It is a complex



Above: Sir Cedrick Hardwicke (right) records the narration for *War of the Worlds* as George Pal supervises. Right: A meal break for the workers building the *Space Ark* in *When Worlds Collide* (1951). Opposite: a selection of scenes from Pal's last film to date, *Doc Savage* (1975).





though thoroughly engrossing mystery about a killer with superhuman mental abilities. Shot in Panavision and Metro-colour by Ellsworth Fredericks, *The Power* is an unnerving drama which moves briskly from frightening reality to terrifying illusion. At best the film draws a superb borderline somewhere between fantasy (you see it happening but . . .) and reality (it is happening but . . .); at the worst it is a tragically underrated film.

In the mid-Sixties, Pal had become interested in developing Logan's Run for the screen, and at one time even had James Bond scripter Richard Maibaum working on the screenplay. Logan's Run went into production in 1975 but, sadly, George Pal was not involved. Instead, he bought the film rights to all 181 *Doc Savage* stories (originally published in pulp magazine form during the years 1933 to 1949) and developed a screenplay for Warner Bros.



The first script, called *Doc Savage, Archenemy of Evil*, was put aside because the character lacked a background. The second script, penned with Joseph Morhaim, fully introduced the *Doc Savage* character, his background and his associates, and was filmed as *Doc Savage, The Man of Bronze*. The film, unfortunately, failed to click at the box-office but Pal has promised a sequel, hopefully restructured to suit contemporary audience tastes.

A Technicolor journey to the moon; a grand collision of planets; the world ravaged by an invasion from Mars; a ferocious battle between man and soldier ants; men exploring the far reaches of outer space; an incredible voyage from history to the future; a visit to a legendary lost continent; a visit to the most bizarre circus ever imagined; the incredible search for a terrifying power harnessed in one man's mind; the worldwide exploits of a supreme adventurer — these are the fantastic worlds of George Pal. And two generations of science-fantasy fandom are all the better for them.

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